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CHILDREN'S THOUGHTS

REV. G. WAGNER.

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CHILDREN'S THOUGHTS.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE WAGNER,

PERPETUAL CURATE OF ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, BRIGHTON,
AUTHOR OF "CHILDREN'S WISHES," AND
SERMONS TO CHILDREN.

"And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?"—(Matt. ix. 4.)

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TO THE

Lambs of my Beloved Flock,

WITH THE EARNEST PRAYER,

THAT HE, TO WHOM ALL HEARTS BE OPEN,

ALL DESIRES KNOWN,

AND FROM WHOM NO SECRETS ARE HID, MAY CLEANSE

THE THOUGHTS OF THEIR HEARTS,

BY THE INSPIRATION OF HIS HOLY SPIRIT,

THAT THEY MAY PERFECTLY LOVE HIM,

AND WORTHILY MAGNIFY

HIS HOLY NAME,

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

PREFACE.

THIS little book is a kind of sequel to a similar one, called "Children's Wishes." It is sent forth with much prayer, that it may accomplish that, which God shall please; and in the encouraging remembrance, that He, who is so great, and because He is so great, hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things, which are despised, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence.

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Part First.

BAD THOUGHTS.

VAIN THOUGHTS;

Or, What will they Profit?

In a former little volume I spoke to my dear young friends about children's *wishes*. In this I am anxious to speak to you about children's *thoughts*, about bad and good *thoughts*. *Wishes* and *thoughts* are not exactly the same; a great many wishes enter your heart, some wrong, and some, I hope, right. But you have many more *thoughts* than *wishes*. David speaks of the *multitude* of his thoughts within him (Ps. xciv. 19). "In the multitude of the thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul!" But do you understand clearly the difference between a *wish* and a *thought?* Perhaps not. Let me

then try to explain it. We may compare our minds to a house, in which there are several rooms. In one of these *understanding* lives. His is a large and lofty room, and there are wide windows in it, from which he gets a beautiful view, and can see a long distance. In another *memory* dwells. His is a back room, and his windows look out upon the road, which leads to the house, so that when he looks out of his window, he cannot see forward, as *understanding* does; he always looks back. In another room dwells *affection*. This is the largest room in the house: indeed, it is so large, that though it has often had a great many visitors, yet it has never been known to be filled. It can always hold more. In another room you will find *will*. His room is much smaller, and is situated close to the door of the house, so that from his window he can see every visitor that comes, and not even *one* can come in without his permission. A great many visitors come to this house, as you

may imagine—some come to call on "understanding," some to converse with "memory," and some to see the door-keeper "will" himself. There are many little visitors, who come up with a light and fairy tread—so light that you cannot hear them, until they give a gentle rap at the door. These are *understanding's* visitors. Some of them the doorkeeper "will" does not admit, others are allowed to enter, and they are shown into the room of *understanding*; some stay a very short time, but others *understanding* likes so very much, that he invites them to live there altogether, and, though they go out sometimes, yet they never leave him. Now, all *understanding's* visitors, whether they stay a short or long time, we call *thoughts.* But there are some, who come to visit the doorkeeper "will." Perhaps you think, that he would admit all, who come to see *him* in particular, but when he does his duty, he sends a good many away. Indeed, as I said before, he admits more

visitors to see *understanding*, than he allows to come into his own little room. What are his visitors called? We give them one name, but you must not, therefore, think that they are all alike, for they are very different; we call them *wishes*. Do you understand now better than you did the difference between "wishes" and "thoughts"? It is your *will* that produces *wishes*, your *understanding* that gathers *thoughts*. It would be a very happy thing, if all the little visitors which call to see *understanding* were *good* visitors; many of them, I am sorry to say, are *bad;* and it is about some of those bad visitors, that I must first speak to you. Will you turn in your Bible to (Jer. iv. 14)? You will find some thoughts mentioned there. What does God say? "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" In these words there are three points which require to be explained. First, what kind of thoughts is meant by "vain" thoughts; secondly, what we ought not to do with them

—"not to let them *lodge* within us;" and thirdly, how to get rid of them.

First, what are "*vain* thoughts"? What do *you* think, that they are? Perhaps you will say, "If any little boy or girl thinks too much of his or her outward appearance, *that* is a *vain* thought." It is a very *vain* thought. Yet this is not all that is meant by the word "vain." It properly signifies everything that is *empty* and *useless*. So the idols of the poor heathen are constantly called "vanity" in Scripture, because they are utterly empty and useless, and cannot help their poor worshippers. "They have mouths," says the Psalmist (Ps. cxxxv. 16, 17), "but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: neither is there any breath in their mouths." And so Jeremiah says (Jer. x. 14, 15)—"Every man is brutish in his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image; for the molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them, they are

vanity, and the work of errors." And hence again St. Paul speaks of the Gentiles (Ephes. iv. 17) as "walking in the *vanity* of their mind," because all their worship and their thoughts are *empty* and *useless*. We wish you, dear reader, to remember, that all thoughts which are empty and useless are *vain* thoughts. Now it is an empty thought and feeling, when a little child loves to look at herself, and admire her own appearance, and so *that* is *one vain* thought. But there are many other *vain* thoughts besides this. Suppose now that you were to sit down, and think a great deal about what you will *be* some day, and make a great many plans as to what you will *do*—well! God may appoint something quite different for you, and so none of your thoughts and plans may be fulfilled. In that case your thoughts will have been *vain* thoughts. I once knew a little boy, who thought, as many boys do now, of being a soldier; he used to dream of battles and victories.

Did he ever become a soldier? No. He had a good aunt, and she used sometimes to read the Bible with him, and it interested him very much, and then he thought, "No, I will not be a soldier; I should like to be a minister of Christ, and explain this beautiful book." His father was surprised to find how all his thoughts were changed. And what did he become when he grew up? He became a minister, and is so now, and he often preaches out of the book, in which his aunt so interested him. You see, then, that all his former thoughts about being a soldier were *vain* thoughts; all the time which he spent in thinking about the battles he would fight, and the courage he would display, was all lost. Much of the time, which is spent in forming plans for the future, is lost time. Such kinds of thoughts are very often *vain* thoughts, for they are empty, and lead to nothing.

Let me tell you of another *vain* thought. Whatever God has told us in His word is

true; when you read in the Bible about heaven and hell, you may be quite sure, that it is all quite true. But some people have different thoughts about these things. They do not go to the Bible in a humble and teachable spirit, to see what God says. They have their own thoughts; what must we say of such thoughts? We must say, that they are *vain.*

Some years ago a young clergyman called on a lady; the conversation soon turned on religious subjects, and what do you think that she said? She said: "Oh, there are many ways to heaven." "Many ways to heaven!" he said. "Yes," she replied; "does it not say, that there are many mansions in heaven?" "Yes," the clergyman answered, "but it does not say, that there are *many ways* to them. It does not follow, because there are many rooms in a large house, that therefore there are many outside doors to the house. The Bible tells us, that there are *many* mansions in heaven, but it also says, that

there is *one* way, and *one* way only, to them, and that way is Jesus Christ." Do you remember, dear reader, where Jesus tells us about the many mansions in heaven? It is (John xiv. 2); now see what Jesus says at (v. 6): "I am the way." Mark, He does not say "*a* way," as if He were one out of many ways, but *the* way, the *only* way to the Father, the *only* way to heaven. What sort of thought then was that lady's thought? It was a *vain* thought, because it was quite different from God's thought. Oh, take care, my dear child, that you get *all* your thoughts about God and His beloved Son, all your thoughts about heaven and hell, from Scripture; if not, how useless they will be —they will be only *vain* thoughts.

But there is still one more kind of *vain* thoughts, which we must not forget to mention. If you have good thoughts at the *wrong* time, then they become vain. Now, it is a good thing for children to think about their lessons, nor is it wrong

in them to think about their games, if they only have these thoughts at the *right* time. But if you think about your books or your games when you kneel upon your knees to pray, then those thoughts, which are right at other times, become *vain* thoughts. You understand now, I hope, what *vain* thoughts are. They are thoughts of self-admiration, thoughts which are contrary to God's word, and thoughts which, though not bad in themselves, come into the mind at the *wrong* time.

But our text tells us, in the second place, what we ought not to do with *such* thoughts: we ought not to let them *lodge* within us; for God complains of Jerusalem: "How long shall thy vain thoughts *lodge* within thee?"

Now this, dear reader, is a very instructive word. You cannot help people passing by your door and windows. Even if you thought, that they were very bad people, still you cannot prevent them; and they might do even more than this; they

might *knock* at your door; you could not hinder it, or have them punished. But suppose, that they wished to come in and see you, when you were busy: you would say, "I cannot see them now, I am engaged;" or if they were bolder still, and were to say, "Can I have a lodging here?" you would reply, "No, there are no lodgings to be had here." You cannot then prevent people passing by your door, but you can prevent them coming into your house. Now it is just so, dear reader, with *bad* thoughts. They may pass by your mind, may knock and try to gain admission into your understanding; you cannot prevent this, and so God does not reckon it to be sin. But what you *can* prevent is their *lodging* in your mind. You can make your "will" shut the door and keep them out. If, then, my dear child, some thought of self-admiration knocks at your door and wishes to come in, do not admit it. It is a *vain* thought; its visit, even for a few minutes, will do you

no good, but much harm. It will throw your mind into confusion. Still worse will it be, if you allow it to *lodge* within you; or if another thought comes, some thought which is contrary to God's word, shut *that* out too—it is a *vain* thought; or if it is some right thought that comes at a wrong time, shut *that* out too; say to it, "I am engaged now; yes, engaged with God—I cannot admit you."

Now, when thoughts of this kind try to gain admission into the mind, there are some people, who say to themselves, "I will not let it *lodge* within me; I will only admit it for a few minutes;" but when it once gets in, it makes itself so pleasant, and begs so hard to be allowed to stay a little longer, that it is often a long time before it goes out again. The only safe way is not to admit them *at all*. It is to keep the door fast closed against all *such* thoughts. But perhaps you will say, "Oh, it is so difficult to keep those vain thoughts out of my mind." It is so, and

therefore let us see, how they may be best got rid of. You will find some beautiful words in the very verse, about which I have been speaking to you, which serve to explain this—"O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness!" Oh! *how* and *where* can we wash our hearts? Turn to (Zech. xiii. 1), and see, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." It must be then in some fountain opened by God Himself. What fountain is that? If you turn to (Rev. i. 5), you will find the answer—"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." The fountain then is the blood of Jesus; and just as the high priest of old took the blood of bulls and goats, and sprinkled everything in the holy place with it, so making it clean, so must you, dear reader, have the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon every part of your heart and mind. First, it must be carried up to "conscience," who dwells

at the top of the house. His room must be sprinkled, and then he will receive more beautiful messages from above, more angel visits from heaven, and will give the door-keeper more urgent commands not to admit any bad thoughts. Then it must be sprinkled in the room where "affection" dwells, for then the heart will take part with "conscience," and enforce his commands on the "will." Then you must carry it where "memory" and "understanding" live, and "memory" will recollect all that is good, and forget all that is bad; and "understanding" will say to "will," "I have so many beautiful and graceful visitors now, so many heavenly thoughts, that I do not wish to see any others. Do not admit any vain thoughts." And then, when "will" finds all the other occupants of the house so changed, so united, and so earnest for God, he will say, "Oh, do wash me too in the fountain!" and he will wish to be a true and faithful doorkeeper in the house of God, readily admitting every *holy*

thought, and speedily shutting out every *sinful* thought, and then, dear reader, God will not have to complain concerning you, "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

WICKED THOUGHTS;

Or, God is like me.

Some people do many wicked things, because they forget God altogether. Others do so, because they do not care, what God thinks of them. But there are also others, who live sinful lives and indulge wicked thoughts, just because they think, that God is *like themselves*. The Psalmist speaks of these in (Ps. l. 21), "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes;" or, as it says in the Prayer-book version, "Thou thoughtest *wickedly*, that I am even such a one as thyself."

Now I think that I can guess, dear reader, one little thought which has come into your mind. Perhaps you will say, "No, I am sure that you cannot." I think I can. Would you like to know what it is? Let me tell you, and then you will see whether I am right. Well, you were thinking, "*I* do not have that wicked thought—I do not think that *God is like me.* God is very great, but I am very little. God made this great and beautiful world, but I cannot make a little grain of dust. I never think, that God is like me. I know that He is not; can any one be so foolish as to think so?" Was this your thought? Perhaps it was. If so, you are quite right. God is *not like you*; but are you quite certain that you never *think,* that God is like you? You know that God is great, and that you are small; that God made the world, and that you cannot make the least thing out of nothing; but are you *quite sure,* that you have never thought, that God is like you in *something else?*

Let us see. It is very kind of God to have made this world so beautiful, and to have filled it with so many graceful things, but all these would have given us no pleasure, if God had not given us eyes, with which we can look upon them. But, after all, there are many things, which we cannot see. There are stars so far off, that our eyes never see them twinkle, and when it is *quite* dark, we cannot see the things quite close to us; and then, too, we cannot look into people's *hearts* to see what they are thinking about. Sometimes you may guess the thoughts of others. You see their eyes sparkle, and you can guess the happy thought, which is passing through their minds. Or the eye is downcast and sorrowful, and you can guess what makes them unhappy. Still, you cannot see the *thoughts* of their hearts. Now, because we cannot see very far off, or very near when it is quite dark, or the thoughts of others' hearts, and we know that they cannot see into ours, we are too

prone to think, that God cannot see afar off—cannot see us in the dark, or when we are all alone, or look into the thoughts of our hearts. Have you never done anything in the dark, or when you were quite alone, which you would not have done, even if the eye of a little child had been upon you? If so, then, at that moment, you must have thought, that God was *like yourself*. Perhaps you have taken what has not belonged to you. It might be only a halfpenny, or a little penny book, or a small cake, or a little jam; you thought that no eye saw you, and no one could miss it, or that God would not take notice of such a *little* thing. You forgot what the Bible says (Prov. xv. 3), "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good;" and when you forgot *that*, then you really had the *wicked* thought in your heart, that God was *like yourself*. There was once a little girl, who thought, that God was *like herself*. Shall I tell you about her? A kind lady,

with whom I am acquainted, took her into her house to train her for service. After a time her brother missed something out of a little box in his bed-room. No eye but One saw who it was, that took it, and the little thief forgot, that God's all-seeing eye was upon her. What was to be done? They did not like to charge her with the sin, although they felt pretty sure, that she must have gone from time to time to this box, and have taken something out of it. Then a thought came into the lady's mind. She got a little piece of paper, and wrote upon it, "Jane, God sees you," and put it in the box, and shut down the lid. Soon after, forgetting that God was not *like her*, the servant-girl went again to the box. She opened the lid, and there she saw her own name and the solemn words, "God sees you." Then she felt that God was not *like her*. Her conscience was aroused, she went straight to her mistress, and, in an agony of grief, confessed her sin.

There are other children who *tell lies*. Oh! if they remembered that God was not *like them*, they would never tell lies. Gehazi would not have told a lie, if he had remembered, that God's eye was upon him. Ananias and Sapphira would not have tried to deceive St. Peter, and the church at Jerusalem, had they only felt, that God was not *like them*, but could see all the thoughts of their hearts.

A gentleman once went into a house, and spoke very earnestly to some little girls on their need of a new heart, and he told them to offer up this prayer to God: "O God! give me a new heart, for Jesus Christ's sake." The gentleman stood near an open door; he could not see into the room, and did not know, that any one was in it. Not long after he was asked to visit a poor little boy, who was ill. He did so, and talked to him. He asked him what he prayed for. "For a new heart," he answered, "that I may not *tell lies*." Struck with the answer, the gentleman

inquired about him, and found that the little boy had been in that very room, near which he had stood, when he talked to the little girls about a new heart. Perhaps *they* had never used that prayer, but he had done so, and God had heard his prayer, and gave him a new heart; and from that time he could not bear lies, or any one that told lies.* Oh! whenever you are tempted to *tell a lie*, remember that God is not *like you*. He sees your heart, He hears your words, and is displeased, when they are not true. Pray, then, like that little boy, for a new heart, that you may never *tell lies*.

But there is another way, in which some persons think, that God is *like them*. The Bible teaches us, that God is very patient and long-suffering. Turn to (Rom. ii. 4): "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God

* See "True Stories for Children," Religious Tract Society.

leadeth thee to repentance?" and St. Peter says most beautifully (2 Pet. iii. 9), "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

God is very gentle with us. He waits for us all to be sorry for our sins, and to come to Jesus. But some people do not like to give up sin. They love it, and do not listen to God, when He tells them to give it up; and, because He does not punish them *at once*, they think that He will never punish them at all, and hope, either that God may have forgotten their sins, or that He does not care about sin, so much as ministers say that He does. This is what those sinners thought, to whom God said, "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence." What do those words mean, "I kept silence"? They mean, "I did not upbraid you — did not punish you;" and so they thought, that God did

not *care* about sin any more, than they did. But He *did* care about it. "He was *not like* them." "I will reprove thee," He said, "and set them in order before thine eyes." What a dreadful thing to have our *sins set in order before our eyes,* every one of them, that we have ever committed, not one missing! But so they *will be,* if we do not repent of them now, and turn to Jesus. Will you now refer in your Bibles to (Eccles. viii. 11): "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set on them to do evil"? They foolishly think that God is *like* them; but what does God say? Look at (v. 12, 13): "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God." Oh! never think, dear

reader, that God does not mark sin; never think, that He forgets it—never think, that He does not care for it. Do not think, that God will never punish it. God *does* hate it—(Jer. xliv. 4)—"Oh! do not that abominable thing, which I hate." He *abhors* it—(Deut. xxxii. 19) "And when the Lord saw it, He abhorred them." God is *angry* with it—(Ps. vii. 11)—"God is angry with the wicked every day." Sin *wearies* God—(Isa. xliii. 24)—"Thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities." Never then think, that God is like you, and does not hate sin far more than you do.

Are these the only ways, in which we are apt to think, that God is such an one as ourselves? Oh, no! Let me explain to you another. Those, who do not feel their sins, think that it is a very easy thing to obtain the forgiveness of sin; but when God teaches us by His Holy Spirit, we feel our sins very deeply, and then it seems to be a *very great* thing to have our

sins forgiven. Many a little child, taught by the Holy Spirit, has said in her heart, "Oh, *can* God forgive my sins? they are so very many!" Do *you* feel this? Do *you* anxiously ask this question? Then I may say to you from God, "Yes, there is forgiveness of sin for you; for God is not like man:" see what He says (Isa. lv. 8) —"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord." Once Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him—till *seven* times?" He thought, no doubt, that *seven* times was very often;—and it is true, that many people would not forgive so often as *seven* times; but what did Jesus say? "I say not unto thee, until *seven* times, but until *seventy-times seven.*" Oh, that is *like* God! And why can God, who is so holy and righteous, forgive us so many sins? Because Jesus has died for us—because God has laid our sins upon Him. Turn to (2 Cor. v. 21)—"For He hath made Him

to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Now, I am going to ask you a question, dear reader; will you try to answer it? Will you *think*—for you cannot answer it without thinking? Is it not a wonderful thing, that God should forgive sins? I think you will say, "Yes." Is it not also a wonderful thing, that God should lay our sins upon Jesus? I think so; do not you? Now, which do you think is the most wonderful thing—that God should forgive sins, or that He should lay our sins on Jesus? Perhaps you find it rather difficult to answer that question. Shall I tell you what I think the most wonderful? It seems to me, that it was the most wonderful, that God should lay our sins on Jesus. Now that God *has* laid our sins on Jesus, I do not wonder so much, that He should love to forgive them. Oh, *we* should never have done for each other, what God has done for *us*. But then God is not at all *like us*.

Are you afraid, then, that God will not forgive you? See what He has done to Jesus: He has laid all your sins upon Him, and nailed them to His cross. Believe then in Jesus, and God will say unto you, "My child, thy sins be forgiven thee."

But perhaps you may have another fear —you fear that God will not *hear your prayers;* God is so great, and you are so small, and your prayers are so feeble, that you think, that they will never reach up to Heaven. Oh, yes! they will. Perhaps some great earthly king would not take any notice of a little child; but our great God will take notice of the very least child. If you are only three or four years old, and can only say, "O God, bless me!" God will hear your little prayer; for God is not *like us.* Sinners despise each other—sinners will not listen to each other; but God listens to the feeblest prayer, and can help us in every difficulty.

A clergyman, who was a chaplain to a

prison, once went into one of the rooms, into which he was not expected to go. What do you think, that he found there? A little boy all alone. His eyes were wet with tears, and he seemed as if he had been kneeling upon his knees. The clergyman wished to know what was in his mind; so he said to him, "What have you been doing?" The child said, "Oh, now, sir, I know, that what you have told us is quite true: I now know, that God does indeed hear our prayers. I did not think, that God would listen to such a *little* boy as I am. I was sent just now into one of the wards, and found that a fine piece of new bread had been left on the table. I wished very much to take it. I thought, 'No one sees me, I may as well have it;' but my heart said too, 'This would be wrong; I must not take that, which is not mine.' So I knelt down and prayed, that God would help me to do right; and He *did* help me; for I got up, turned my back on the bread, and went out of the room. And now, sir,

I have been thanking Him for keeping me from doing this sin." *

So, dear reader, will God hear you, if you pray to Him from your heart. He will hear you, however young you are, and will help you to overcome Satan. Will you try always to remember that it is wicked to think that God is *like us?* God is not like us. We cannot see in the dark, or into each other's hearts, but God can do both. Sinners forget their sins, and do not fear to commit them. They think it a small thing in God's sight, but God reckons it "an abominable thing," and will surely punish it. We are slow to forgive others, but God delights in forgiving the sins of those who come to Jesus. We do not like to be troubled with beggars, but God is never weary of hearing prayer, even the prayers of very little children. How unlike us is God! Is He not? It is only the wicked who say, "God is altogether such an one as myself."

* See "A Sister's Stories," Religious Tract Society.

HARD THOUGHTS OF GOD;

Or, the Hidden Talent.

THERE is a beautiful parable, which Jesus spoke a short time before He died upon the cross. You know on what day it was that He died; it was on a Friday. This parable seems to have been spoken on Tuesday evening; you will find it, if you turn to (Matt. xxv. 14), &c. It is called the "parable of the talents." It tells us of a man, who went from home. Before he left it, he called together his servants, and lent them some of his property, that they might trade with it in his absence. It is not the custom in England for masters to do so, when they go abroad, but it is the custom in the East. Did this mas-

ter give all his servants just the same sum? No. They had not all the same abilities. To one he gave five talents. That was a large sum. Do you know how much a talent is? It is £187 10s. How much, then, would five talents be?—£937 10s. To another he gave two talents, or £375, and to a third, *one* talent. You would feel very rich if you had only *one* talent,—would you not? But the servant to whom it was given, did not seem pleased; perhaps he was displeased, because he did not like to see the other servants entrusted with so much more. What did the servants do with their talents? The one, who had received five talents, set to work at once. He traded with the money, and he was so successful, that by the time his master had returned, he had doubled his money; he had gained besides them five talents more. And the one, who had received two talents, was just as active, for he doubled his money likewise, and gained other two talents. Did

the servant, who had received but one talent, do the same, and gain another talent? He *might* have done so; and when his master returned, he would have been just as much pleased with him, as he was with his other servants, and he would have spoken the same kind words to him. He would have said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." For if you look, you will see that he spoke just as kindly to the servant, who had doubled his two talents, as to the one, who had doubled his five talents. But that servant did not trade with his one talent. What did he do with it? did he spend it on himself? No, he went and dug a hole in the earth, and then buried the money; how foolish this was! The money could not increase in the earth. *Seeds* are increased when put into the ground, but not money. Why did he act so foolishly?

One reason was, because he was slothful; he did not like the *trouble* of trading; so (v. 26) his lord said to him, "Thou wicked and *slothful* servant." But another reason was, that he did not *love* his master. The other servants *loved* him very much, and thought him so very good and kind, and so it gave them great pleasure to increase their lord's money. But the slothful servant did not *love* him; he indulged wrong thoughts in his mind about his master's character, and instead of feeling his kindness, he thought that he was a severe and hard master; and this *wrong* and *hard* thought it was, that led him to go and bury his one talent in the earth. "Lord," he said, "I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed, and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine."

Do you understand this parable, dear

reader? The master represents God; the servants represent ourselves, for we are called to be the servants of God. The talents are the gifts and grace, which God bestows, to enable us to serve Him. And then the conduct and the doom of the slothful servant show us what a sinful thing it is to have *hard thoughts* of God. How many wicked and *bad* thoughts there are. I have told you already about "vain" thoughts and "wicked" thoughts; now let me tell you something about *hard* thoughts of God. As I mention them, will you look into your heart, and say, "Do I ever indulge this thought?" God is very good and kind. But there *is a hard master*; do you know who it is? It is not your teacher, even if he is strict; nor your earthly master, though he should be very particular. It is *Satan*, that I mean. There is no master in the world so *hard* as Satan. Many people do not think so now, because they *like* to do many things, which Satan tempts them to

do. But some day they will find out what a *cruel* master Satan is.

Shall I tell you something, that he often does? He tempts people to sin against God, and when they have committed many sins, and their conscience makes them afraid, then Satan puts this thought into their hearts: "You have sinned so often, that God will never forgive you."

I once met a young man, who had just this thought of God, he told me so himself; he said, "I have been very wicked, I know that there is no forgiveness for me, so I may just as well please myself in this world." Oh! how wrong that was! What a *hard* thought of God! For just at that very moment, in which he had that *hard* thought, God loved his soul, and wished him to turn to Him, and was ready to forgive him all his sins. Perhaps you remember some of the beautiful passages in Scripture, which show us, how the heart of Jesus yearns over perishing sinners, and how He wishes them to

come to Him. Turn, for instance, to (Ezek. xviii. 31, 32), "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." How beautiful, too, are the words which God spoke to Ephraim (Jer. xxxi. 20), "Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do *earnestly remember* him still; therefore My bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord;" or what can be more full of love than those comforting words (Isaiah i. 18), "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool?" Do you know *how* it is that sins, which are like scarlet, can be made as white as the

pure snow? The blood of Jesus does it. The blood of Jesus washes them out of the heart and out of God's great book at the same time. Dear reader, have you this hard thought of God in your heart? Do you think of Him as a *hard Master*, as one who will not forgive you? Oh! that thought is not true; it is not kind. You could not get that thought from God's word. It is a temptation from Satan; such a thought of God is as unlike the true God as black is unlike white. Never, then, let that *hard* thought remain in your heart. Do you feel that you have sinned against God? Does your conscience make you afraid? Jesus says, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." Hasten to Him—go at once! give your heart, however sinful, to Him. *That* is the way to honour God, and to be happy in your own soul.

But there is another kind of *hard* thought of God. There are some who think within themselves, "God has given me so *very*

little, and requires so *very much,* it is no use to try to serve Him. If He were satisfied with less, or had given me more, then it might have been of some use to make the effort." This was just the thought of the slothful servant in the parable. One talent!" he thought, "what can I do with this for such a master? he should have given me *five.* I will go and bury it in the earth, and give it back to him when he returns." But such thoughts are quite wrong. God is not a *hard Master,* but a *kind Father.* Have you a kind father or mother—one who loves you, and whom you love very much? God is *kinder* still. When you try to please your father or mother, do they despise your efforts because they are weak? Oh! no: they value the very least act of service, because it shows your love to them; for it is not only what you *do,* but what you *feel* towards them, that they regard. So, dear reader, it is with God. You may be able to do *very little* for God. God may have

given you *one* talent. You may not be so clever as some, not know so much as others, not have much money; you may be very young too,—still you can do something for God; and if you love Him, He will accept your *little acts* of service, however small, and value them much more than your mother does. God does not despise *little* things, or the service of *little* children. Turn to (1 Cor. i. 27, 28): "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the *weak things* of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and *things which are despised,* hath God chosen—yea, and *things which are not,* to bring to nought things that are;" and why?—"That no flesh shall glory in His presence." Samuel was a *little* boy, yet God accepted his services. Naaman's maid was a *little* maid, yet God made her a great blessing to her master. Little children praised Jesus in the temple, and He accepted their praises.

Oh! never think that our God is a *hard Master*. If you have only *one* talent, *use it*, and God will not only accept your weak service, but will give you more grace, and more opportunities of serving Him. He will say, "Thou hast been faithful over a *few* things—I will make thee ruler over *many* things." There are some beautiful words too (Heb. vi. 10) which we ought not to forget: "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." And so again, it is with *giving*, as well as *serving*; perhaps when some master, or teacher, or parent has encouraged you to give to the poor or to the heathen, the thought has come into your heart, "What good will a penny do?" Will so great a God notice a penny? Yes, He is not a *hard* Master. He will notice it, if you give *out of* LOVE *to Jesus*, and it costs you something. A little girl was once asked the meaning of

"charity." What do you think she said? —"Giving away what we do not want." Was this right? Oh! no. She would have been nearer the truth if she had said, "Giving away what we *do* want," though this is not exactly the meaning. When Jesus was on earth, He stood one day near the treasury. Some rich people came, and cast in large sums of money. But a poor widow came, and cast in two mites. Perhaps some of the people that stood by said, "Oh, what a miserable gift! God will never accept it." But what did Jesus say? Did He despise that *little* farthing? Oh! no. He said, as you will see (Mark xii. 43, 44), "Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." The same kind Saviour, who noticed the poor widow's two mites, receives the smallest gift, which you

offer to Him, and He loves it best, when it has *cost* you something.

Do you think, dear reader, that we have told you now all the ways in which people have *hard* thoughts of God? Oh! no, we have not. Let me tell you one more way. When it pleases God not to give you something, which you want very much, or He takes away from you some dear relation, a mother, or sister, or brother, oh! that is the time when Satan will try to put *hard* thoughts of God into your mind. The thought will come into your bleeding heart: "Oh! how unkind it is of God to take my dear mamma away from me!" Is it so? Oh! no. God is never unkind. He is very kind, even when He pains our hearts very much. God loves us, when He puts us to grief.

A gentleman once went to a London hospital to visit a sick person. He read and spoke to her about Jesus. There was a little boy of five years old very near;

he was very attentive. The gentleman was much pleased with him, and told him so. The little boy said: "Oh! I like to hear you talk about God and good things." —"And pray," said the gentleman, "who taught you to love to hear about God, and good things?"—"Mother," said the little boy, "taught me to pray to God, and to love Him."—"Do you not think," said the gentleman, "that it was very kind of your mother to teach you?"—"Yes, I love her dearly for making me a good boy."—"Were you always good?" said the gentleman,—"Oh, no!" he replied, "not always. I sometimes tell stories, and disobey my mother, and then she is obliged to whip me, to make me a good boy."—"Do you love your mother when she whips you?"—"Oh, yes!" he said, and repeated the words, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother shame." Afterwards he told the gentleman that, when he did wrong, and was naughty, his mother

prayed with him, and then whipped him, and afterwards prayed again.*

Now that little boy did not have hard thoughts of his mother when she whipped him. He knew that it was all for his good. So, dear reader, when God corrects you, and takes away from you some one, whom you love, do not have hard thoughts of God. Pray that you may feel, "God loves me now. It is all for my good." What beautiful words those are (Heb. xii. 6): "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

* "A Sister's Stories," Religious Tract Society.

RECKLESS THOUGHTS;

Or, I Don't Care.

In one of the beautiful parables Jesus says—

"There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man." —(Luke xviii. 2).

What kind of judge should you say, that this was? Perhaps you would say, "he was an unjust judge." Yes, he certainly was. He is called so (v. 6), "Hear what the *unjust* judge saith," and the cruel way in which he acted, showed it clearly enough: for in the same city there lived a widow; she was a lonely and desolate woman; she had lost her husband, and had no one to defend her from the unkind-

ness and injustice of others; so she went to the judge for protection from her adversary. But for some time he would not listen to her complaints, and when he did so, it was not because he feared God, or because he felt that it was right, nor was it, because he felt compassion for her; no, he was a selfish man, and did not like to be *disturbed;* he said within himself, "because this widow *troubleth* me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." But we may say, I think, that this judge was something more than *unjust.* He was a *reckless* man. He did not care for any one. He did not care what God thought of him, nor did he care at all for the opinion of others; and it was just this *recklessness* that made him "unjust." Had he feared God or cared about the opinions and feelings of others, he would not have been so unkind to this poor widow. Perhaps, dear reader, you can guess now about what *kind of thoughts* I am going to speak to you in this chapter.

It is about *reckless* thoughts. Children, I fear, sometimes have such thoughts when they have done something wrong, and are spoken to about it, and are told how displeased God is with them; instead of being very sorry, and going alone to pray to God in secret, they lift up their heads and say, "I don't care." Or if they have broken something, or hurt another child, or perhaps pained their mother's or teacher's feelings, they do not feel sorry, as they ought to feel, but say in an unkind and reckless way, "I don't care." If you, my dear child, have ever used such words, may God mercifully send you His Holy Spirit to teach you how wrong and sinful they are.

There are three kinds of reckless thoughts—reckless thoughts about God, reckless thoughts about others, and reckless thoughts about ourselves.

Some people have reckless thoughts about God, and only about God. They care very much what others think of them,

but not what God thinks of them. But very often when people indulge reckless thoughts about God, in a little while they grow reckless about themselves and others. This unjust judge was reckless in both ways—"He feared not God, neither regarded man." Let us begin with *reckless thoughts about God.*

Do you clearly understand what they are? Now we cannot call those reckless, who say in their hearts, "God does not see me," or "God does not care for it." These are very *sinful* thoughts, but they are not *reckless* thoughts—they show great unbelief, and sad ignorance of God, but not recklessness. But when a little child *does* know, that God sees him, that God cares about all he does, and says, and thinks, and being reminded of this, when he is angry or sulky, says, "I do not care what God thinks!" then that is a reckless thought. Was it not a very reckless thought, when Pharaoh said to Moses (Ex. v. 2) "Who is the Lord, that I should

obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." It is as if he said, "I do not care what God says." So again, there are some who had reckless thoughts in the days of Isaiah the prophet; for he tells us what they thought in their hearts (Is. v. 19), "Let Him make speed and hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it." And so it was with the unjust judge. He knew very well, that God cares for the weak and lonely—that He is the helper of the fatherless, and the God of the widow, and yet he cared not for that; for a long time he would not help the poor widow at all, and when he did so, it was only because he selfishly cared about his own ease and comfort. "He *feared* not God." How different Joseph was from all these. When he was in Egypt he treated his brethren with great wisdom; but if he had not feared God, he would most likely have

punished them for all their unkindness to him. Perhaps you remember how he once said to them (Gen. xlii. 18), "This do and live, for I fear God." David's spirit, too, was very different from that of the *unjust* judge. Saul persecuted poor David for ten long years, and "hunted him like a partridge on the mountains." One day he came into the very cave, where David was hiding himself. But as it was a large, and very likely a dark cave, Saul did not see David. Then David's men said to him, "Now is the time to kill him." "Behold (1 Sam. xxiv. 4) the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee." Then David arose. Did he kill Saul? Oh, no! he only cut off a piece of his garment to show Saul, that he might have killed him if he had liked. He would not suffer his servants to rise against his enemy; and why not?—because David was not *reckless* about God's

will; he cared about God's will more than anything else. But the most beautiful instance of this is Jesus. Our Saviour always cared about His Father's will, and pleased Him in everything. Those beautiful words were fulfilled in Him, which we read (Ps. xvi. 8)—"I have set the Lord always before me." When, then, dear reader, you have done anything wrong, and some one tells you of it, you should be thankful to them, and go into your quiet chamber, and, kneeling upon your knees, ask God to forgive you, and to teach you to think more about Him. Never say with your lips, or feel in your heart, "I don't care." God is very kind to you. No one has ever given you what God has given you. And if God *cares* for you so very much, ought you not to care for Him? And if Satan tempts you to do or say what is sinful, ought you not to feel very sorry? Oh, yes, you should! I hope that you will never say, "I don't care."

But there is another kind of recklessness—recklessness *about the feelings of others.* It was so with the unjust judge. He not only did not "fear God," but he did not *regard man.* This point requires some explanation. Sometimes it may be right not to regard men. It is so, when they tell us to do something wrong, or wish us not to do something right. So, when the ten spies brought a bad report of the land to the children of Israel, Caleb and Joshua were quite right in not regarding their words. And so again, when the Jews wished Peter and John not to preach any more in the name of Jesus, they were quite right, when they answered (Acts iv. 19, 20), "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things, which we have seen and heard.'

Now it is not likely, dear reader, that your teachers and parents will ask you to do what is *wrong*, but it may be, that your

companions may tempt you to do so; and if this should ever be the case, then you should not yield to them. There is many a boy who wishes to be *manly*. Now what is manliness? It is not manliness to do, and to lead others to do, what is displeasing to God, or to be overbearing towards those, who are weaker than you are. Real manliness is not to be afraid to do what is pleasing to God, to confess Christ with all humility but with all boldness, and to be able to say "no," when others would lead you to neglect God and your soul. It is not recklessness, but Christian courage, to continue in prayer, like Daniel, when others would stop us, and to refuse to worship any idol, which the world may set up, like Daniel's three companions. There was once a little girl, the child of poor parents, who was put into a union-house. *There* she was separated from her father and mother, and slept in a room with many other children. This little girl loved prayer. One night there was a dreadful

thunder-storm. It awoke the children, and many were frightened. This little girl thought that it was very awful too; she got up and knelt down upon her knees to pray. Many girls older than herself laughed at her, but she was not afraid. She kept on praying. Was she not quite right in disregarding those wicked children? Yes, it was God who taught her not to care for them.

But when your mother or Christian teacher tells you of some fault, or when you have pained their hearts by something wrong, or by neglecting your duty, then you should never say, "I don't care." Just think how much anxiety you have given your kind teacher, and still more a loving mother; and will you wound their hearts afresh? In a few short years, perhaps, your mother will die. Imagine yourself standing by her bedside in the still and darkened chamber—her countenance is all pale, and her voice so weak, that she can scarcely speak to you. Oh how sad is

your heart at the thought of losing her! But oh! if you have given her pain and been disobedient; if, when she has gently spoken to you, you have said, "I don't care," what a sharp, deep sting there will be in your bosom; and when you stand beside your mother's grave, the bitter feeling will come into your heart, "Oh that I had never pained my dear mother: if she were but with me again I would never never say, 'I don't care.'"

Let me tell you something about a little child, who never pained her mother's feelings. She died when she was only three years and a-half old, and yet, though so young, she loved Jesus. Before she was taken ill, she used to love to sit in her little rocking-chair and sing gently to herself "Jesus, Jesus;" and when she heard any one sing anything, that she did not love, she would lift up her little hand, and say, "No, no, Jesus, Jesus." This little child was very kind to all, but her love to her parents was very beautiful; she always

did what they told her to do, and loved to give them anything that she could.

Before she was two years old, when she was well and strong, and could run about and play, she saw one day, that her mother was not well, so she went to her father and said to him in a sorrowful voice, "Poor mother, very poorly." The father, also, was not well, and said to her, "Yes, Annie, and father is very poorly too." When the little child heard this, she looked earnestly at her father and burst into tears. Then she went and found a cushion, which she brought in her little hands and put under his head, and so she showed her gentle love, and tried to comfort her father.* Could you not, dear children, be as gentle and considerate to your parents as this little child? Oh! try never to give pain to your parents' and teachers' hearts, and never say again, "I don't care."

* See a nice little book called the "Life of a Child," by the author of "Ministering Children."

There is one more kind of recklessness, which this unjust judge seems not to have felt, and that is, recklessness about *ourselves*. I have met many persons in this state of mind. Shall I tell you how they have become so? Sometimes it is in this way—they have not sought their happiness in God, but in the creature; they have met with disappointment, and then they have grown careless about everything, body and soul. Sometimes it is, because they have lived wicked lives. They have felt their hearts growing worse and worse. Then they began to despair of ever growing better, and so they have become reckless. So it was with Judas; but true Christians, dear reader, never grow reckless. God may send them disappointments and trials, but these ought only to lead them to cleave to God more and more, and to love Jesus with a holier love. If you are a Christian child, you will not be reckless; you will never say about God, "I don't care;" you

will never wilfully pain your parents and teachers, and say, "I don't care;" you will never say of yourself, "I dont care what becomes of me;" for you will feel, that you belong to Jesus, and you will wish to have an abundant entrance into God's everlasting kingdom.

PROCRASTINATING THOUGHTS;

Or, "The Time is not Come."

In the first chapter of the prophet Haggai, and second verse, you will find the following words:—"This people say, the time is not come—the time that the Lord's house should be built." What house was this about which the prophet speaks? It was the temple of Jerusalem. It had been destroyed about seventy years before, and the Jews had been carried away to Babylon. But now, according to God's promise, many of them were restored to their homes; and God told them to rebuild the temple and the walls of the city. Perhaps you would think, that they would have rejoiced to build the beautiful temple, that they would have said in

their hearts, "Oh, how delightful it will be to worship God again in His house!" A few felt this, no doubt, but, alas! most of the people did not care about the Lord's house. They did not indeed say, "We do not want a temple at all," nor did they say, "We do not believe, that God wishes it to be built," for they knew, that God had commanded it: they felt, that it ought to be built *some* day, but they did not like to begin to build it at *once*. "The time," they said, "is not come—the time that the Lord's house should be built." And so they put it off to the future. Now, what do you call a person, who puts off everything to the future? Perhaps you say, "idle,"—it may be so—but that is not the right word. Others may say, "selfish,"—it may be so—but that is not the right word. What is the right word? It is a very long word; but I wish you to understand it clearly, because it is the best word to use—"Procrastinating." It comes from a Latin word, which signifies

to-morrow; so that "procrastination" means the putting off until to-morrow something, which ought to be done to-day. The thoughts, then, about which I am going to speak to you in this chapter, are "procrastinating thoughts." There are three points which I will try to explain: first, some procrastinating thoughts; then their causes; and, lastly, their consequences.

First, some *procrastinating* thoughts. Perhaps you could tell me some such thoughts. Is there nothing, that you feel inclined to put off to another time, although your conscience tells you, that you ought to do it at once? Some little child would say, I think, "Yes, my lessons." It is a great temptation to many children to put off preparing their lessons to the last moment. Some who are clever do so, because they think that they are sure to prepare them in time; and some who are not quick do so, although they know that they will not be able to prepare them pro-

perly. This is a very bad habit, for when a lesson is learnt in a great hurry, it is often forgotten afterwards, and many who put off learning it, are unable to say it when the time comes; and then how much trouble it causes! Your teachers are troubled, because they are obliged to give you some punishment, though they dislike doing so very much; and you are troubled, because you cannot enjoy yourself when others are playing. If, then, dear reader, you are inclined to this bad habit, do try to break it off at once; and when this procrastinating thought comes into your mind—"I will do it by-and-bye"—do not give way to it, pray against it, and set to work at once. How much better it will be to overcome it yourself in an earnest and cheerful spirit, than to oblige your teachers or parents to set you punishments, which make you both unhappy. Besides which, procrastinating thoughts displease God. God was displeased with the Jews, when they said, "The time is not come—the

time that the Lord's house should be built," and he sent them a great many chastisements, because they *would procrastinate.*

But there are many other procrastinating thoughts besides this—many bad habits which we ought to strive against *at once.* Some children do not like to get up in good time in the morning; they are always a little after the time; though they know, that it is a bad thing to be slothful, the Word of God says so much about it. Turn, for instance, to (Prov. xxvi. 13, 14)—"The slothful man saith, 'there is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets.' As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed." They always mean to rise earlier, but they always put off doing so until the morrow—"I will get up early *to-morrow,* but this morning I must sleep a few minutes longer." What is this but a *procrastinating thought?* And then, again, there are other sinful feelings: such as passion, jealousy, revenge, an unforgiv-

ing spirit, which it is very difficult to overcome. Most people see, that they ought to overcome them, but they put off the struggle; they indulge them *for the moment*, and then hope to resist them on the *morrow;* they say in their hearts, as those Jews did, "The time is not come." O do not give way, my dear child, to those procrastinating thoughts. Search your own heart; try to find out what your besetting sin is—what your fault is, and, whatever it is, begin at once to overcome it: cast yourself at once on Jesus, for His strength to be made perfect in your weakness; pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit, and, in dependence on Him, strive earnestly against all the evils in your heart. If you do so, through God's grace they will grow weaker and weaker; but if you say in your heart, "The time is not come, I will begin to-morrow," then you will find sin to be stronger in you *to-morrow* than it is to-day. You will find it to be more difficult to overcome sloth, or tem-

per, or any other sinful habit or feeling, to-morrow, if you strengthen it by indulgence to-day.

But there is another procrastinating thought, so powerful, that we might call it the *master-thought*. Have you watched a piece of mechanism—a watch, for instance, with all its wheels rapidly moving round? If you have done so, perhaps you may have observed *one spring* that has set the whole in motion: it is the *master-spring*. It is so with the heart. Could you look into the heart of the true Christian, you would see one great *master-thought* in it, which sets hundreds of lesser thoughts in motion; and so if you could look into an unchanged, unsanctified heart, there, too, you would see one great *procrastinating thought*—a master-thought, the parent of a great many little procrastinating thoughts. Oh, what is that thought? It is this—"I will go to Jesus *some* day, but *not now*." "The time is not come:" how many indulge this sinful

thought. Some people think, "I am too wicked to go to Jesus now, I will wait a little until I get better, and then I will go, and He will receive me." But this is all wrong, for you will not get better before you go to Jesus. You must go to Him *just as you are,* with all your sins, with your wicked heart, that He may wash it in His own blood. Never think, dear reader, that you must or *can* make yourself *better* before you go to Jesus. You do not do this with your body. When you are ill, you do not say, "I will wait until I get better, and *then* I will send for a physician." You send for a physician, just because you are ill, and cannot cure yourself. Well, Jesus is the great physician of the soul. It is the *sick* He visits, and not those who think themselves well. See what He Himself says (Mark ii. 17) —"They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Do you feel your sins?

Then that is the very reason *why* you should come to Jesus at once. "Behold," we read (2 Cor. vi. 2), "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." Other children put off coming to Jesus, because they think that they are too young to come. Should any child think so, such a beautiful verse being in the Bible, as (Prov. viii. 17) "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." Oh, no! no child should think so; who has heard that beautiful verse, or read of the love of Jesus to little children. Look at (Mark x. 13-16)— "And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them, and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not

enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." Perhaps, dear reader, your parents often say to you, "When you are older you shall have this, and do that." What a happy thing it is, that you may go to Jesus now. Can you understand what I have said to you? Then you are not too young to give your heart to Jesus.

But now let us proceed to point out some causes of these procrastinating thoughts. Why is it that children put off learning their lessons, and dislike getting up early, and think that they will give up their hearts to God *to-morrow*, and not *to-day?* One reason is, *idleness.* They do not like the trouble of learning, or getting up, or praying. What Pharaoh said falsely of the Israelites may be said with truth to many children, "Ye are idle, ye are idle." Oh! my dear child, do not be idle in anything, not in preparing your lessons, not in prayer, not

in seeking God. Those who please God are never idle. The angels in heaven sing without ceasing that beautiful song (Rev. vii. 12), "Amen, blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever." The saints in heaven are never idle (v. 15), for "they serve Him day and night in His temple." Why should *you* be idle? your time is as precious as theirs. Now is the only time to prepare for eternity, now is the time to seek Jesus, now is the time to glorify God. Never be idle. "Be not slothful," says St. Paul (Heb. vi. 12), "but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Another reason is *distaste*, and the notion that we shall be happier, if we do *not* live to God. We never wish to put off the things, that we like; children at school feel, that the day of their return home is a bright day; they wish it to come quicker than it does. They do not wish to put it

off, because they love their home. If, then, you *loved* your lessons, you would not put off preparing them; if you *loved* prayer, you would not listen to excuses in neglecting it. If you *loved* Jesus, and felt what a happy thing it is to know Him, you would not wish for one moment to keep back your hearts from Him. Some people think, that they would become dull and gloomy, if they were to be religious. Why do they think so? It is because they know the pleasures, which they will have to give up; but they do not know the happiness and peace and joy, that there is in Christ. What a different account the word of God gives of true religion. Look at (Prov. iii. 17), "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" St. Peter speaks (i. Peter i. 8), "of rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." St. Paul says (Rom. xiv. 17), "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and he ex-

horts us (Phil. iv. 4), to "rejoice in the Lord alway." Never, then, think that it will make you dull and unhappy to give up your heart to God. It is Satan who puts that sinful thought into your heart. When you know and love Jesus, you will find new pleasures, and you will enjoy everything much more — your studies, your play, and your home.

Is there any other cause of procrastination?—Yes, "*selfishness.*" This was the root of it in the hearts of those Jews, who said, "The time is not come—the time that the Lord's house should be built." They had their own luxurious and beautifully furnished houses, and were satisfied. They did not like to give their time and money to build the Lord's house. The prophet said to them (v. 4), "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" Dear reader, do not be selfish. Do not indulge yourself, but try to please God. Jesus did not please Himself.

But do you remember the third point, which I promised to explain to you? It was the *consequences* of procrastination. There are many consequences, of which there is not time to speak. There is loss of time. It is very sinful to lose time; God tells us to *redeem* it, (see Eph. v. 16,) "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Then, as I have already told you, bad habits grow stronger and stronger every day, so that the longer you procrastinate, the more difficult you will find it to overcome them. But the most fearful consequence is the loss of the soul. Have you ever thought, dear reader, how *dreadful* it would be to lose your soul? Procrastination ruins thousands. People put off repentance and coming to Jesus. Death comes and finds them unprepared. Do you remember hearing of the beautiful ship, which was lost some time ago at Balaklava?—it was full of things for our soldiers, and there was much money in it. Why was it lost? Because it was kept

outside the harbour week after week, instead of being brought in and unloaded. Jesus, dear reader, is our harbour; enter this harbour *at once*, or the storms will break over you, and you will be *lost*.

Let me tell you an anecdote* about a little boy, who did *not* procrastinate, and about his father, who, alas! did so, and lost, we have reason to fear, his soul. The father was a red Indian chief. He heard the missionaries preach the gospel, but he did not like it, and kept away from them. He had five children, God took four away from him. This softened his heart a little, and he brought his last child to the missionaries to be taught by them. From the very first, the Spirit of God taught this little boy; whilst the other children were playing, he would go into some quiet place and study his Testament. At last he fell sick. The missionary used to visit him, and one day he said to him, "My

* Bernau's "Missionary Labours in British Guiana."

child, where is your hope, for I think that you will not be much longer in this world?" The little boy replied, "You have often told us in school, that Jesus Christ shed His blood for sinners. You also said, that He invites children to come to Him: I have come to him." "Do you believe," said the Missionary, "that your sins are forgiven?" "I do believe," he answered, "that God has forgiven my sins." Some days after, he said, "I think that this will be my last day." When his heathen father came to see him, he said, "Father, God gave you five children, and has taken them all away one after another; I am the last. I fear, if I had grown up, you would not have given me up to God. You do not care what the missionary says; and when he begs you to come and learn about Jesus, you say, 'wait a little;' I fear the time will never come." The little boy, alas! was right. The father wept at the time, but the impression passed away, and he died some time after, in the woods.

Dear reader, come, like that little boy, to Jesus; come now. Do not say in your heart, as the heathen father said, "wait a little." If you do, death may seize *you*, as it seized *him*, when you do not expect it, and when your heart is quite unprepared. Do not say, like those procrastinating Jews, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built," but say with St. Paul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Part Second.

GOOD THOUGHTS.

HOLY THOUGHTS;

Or, Consider Jesus.

A CONVERTED negro woman once came to her minister and said to him, "Sir, as to my outward conduct I can manage that more easily; but will you tell me how to manage my thoughts?" It is, dear reader, a great and difficult thing to manage our *thoughts;* so many crowd into our minds. Some of them we ought to send out again at once, and others we ought to keep fast. In some foregoing chapters I have tried to point out a few thoughts, which you ought *not* to keep in your minds. Do you remember any of them? Perhaps you say "Yes; you wrote about 'vain thoughts,' about 'wicked thoughts,' about 'hard

thoughts of God,' about 'reckless thoughts,' and about 'procrastinating thoughts.'" All these are bad thoughts; and there are a great many more, such as "ignorant thoughts," "cowardly thoughts," "angry thoughts," "revengeful thoughts," "deceitful thoughts," "hasty thoughts," and "self-defending thoughts." It would take me very long, if I were to explain all these to you, so I shall pass at once to some *good* thoughts. And first I will speak to you about "holy thoughts;" or, "thoughts of Jesus."

Now, will you turn to (Heb. iii. 1), where you will find some beautiful words, "Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Perhaps you will say, "what has this to do with *holy thoughts?* It does not speak about thoughts at all." It is true that we do not find the word "thoughts" there—but what does *consider* mean? what is it to *consider* a thing? It is to *fix your thoughts* upon it. There are some persons who never *fix*

their thoughts on anything. A great many thoughts of all kinds pass through their minds every day, quite as many as, and perhaps more than, pass through the minds of those, who are very wise; they let them all in, but one seems to chase the preceding thought out. Perhaps a *good* thought comes, but a *vain* thought follows, and the good one is gone; and in this way year after year passes away, and their minds are always empty and distracted. They never *consider*. Now what you ought to do is to learn to *fix your thoughts;* whenever the Spirit of God brings a good thought into your mind, keep fast hold of it; and whenever a bad thought comes, close the door of your heart against it.

Have you ever thought of the many lessons, which the beautiful flowers teach us? There is a graceful little flower, which we have often gathered, which teaches us more than one lesson. It is very delicate and beautiful, about four or five inches high, and it has several little white flowers

arranged along its stem. But these little flowers are very often *closed*—when the dark night comes on, or when a cloud passes over, the drosera closes its beautiful eyes, as if it were afraid that the darkness would hurt it; and when the sun shines brightly, it opens them again, and looks as if it quite enjoyed the light and warmth. But this little flower has a very curious leaf—it is round, and covered with long and thick hairs, and it often holds a drop of sticky matter, which looks like a drop of dew; and when a fly, thinking perhaps that this drop of matter might be honey, settles upon the leaf, it closes up and holds it fast.* There are two lessons, which we may gather from this flower; first, just as the drosera closes its little flower, when a cloud passes over, so we should close the eye of our minds, when any evil thought comes; and just as its leaves close up, and hold fast anything, that settles upon them,

* This fact is fully established in the case of the American drosera.

so we should *hold fast* every good thought. Try to *fix* your thoughts—*consider, consider.* Many—oh! how many—lose their souls, because they *never consider.* They do not ponder the word of God, do not hold fast the holy thoughts, which the Spirit of God gives. But *what* ought we to *consider?* There are many things we may *consider*—we may consider the great purpose, for which God put us into this world—"that we might live for Him." We may consider that solemn eternity, whither we are going. We may consider our *own hearts,* how sinful, how deceitful, and how forgetful they are. We may consider our besetting sins and our chief dangers. But there is something else that St. Paul tells us to consider—something greater than all these. It is Jesus, the Son of God; Jesus, our great and merciful Saviour. "Consider," he says, "the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

How many names does St. Paul give to Christ in this verse? Look and see.

Two names; first he calls Him an "Apostle," and then a "High Priest." Let me try to explain this to you, for when you think of Jesus you ought to think of Him, as your *Apostle* and *High Priest*. It seems rather strange, that St. Paul should call Christ "Apostle," for this was the very name, which our Saviour gave to His disciples. Do you know what it means? It signifies *one sent*. Our Saviour called His disciples "apostles," because He chose and sent them to preach the Gospel, and St. Paul calls Christ the Apostle, because the Father sent Him into the world to die for our sins, and by His death to bring us to God. If you have read the Gospels carefully, you must have noticed, how often Jesus speaks of Himself, as being sent of God the Father; so after those beautiful words (John vi. 37), "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out;" He adds, "For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine

own will, but the will of *Him* that sent Me, and this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." How often does the Saviour use those words in these verses? Three times. Now turn to (John xvii. 18), "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." If you will look through St. John's Gospel, you will find these words very often, but we have quoted a sufficient number to show, how often Jesus thought of His being sent by His Father into the world. Now you, my dear reader, have sometimes been sent by your parents to do something. Possibly you have not always liked it. You have done what you were told, but not cheerfully. Your countenance looked sad, and perhaps

there was a murmur on your lips. It was not so with Jesus—oh, no! when His Father sent Him, what did He say? You will find it (Ps. xl. 7, 8), "Lo I come, I delight to do Thy will, O My God, yea Thy law is within My heart." Oh! it must have been sad to leave heaven and His Father's glory, where He enjoyed His Father's love, and where every angel sang His praise. It must have been sad to leave all this, to come into this world, to become a little babe, to suffer and die upon the cross. Yet Jesus did not hesitate, but said "Lo, I come." He loved His Father's will, and He loved our souls so very much. If we could have seen how much Jesus left for us, what riches of glory He gave up to take the form of a servant, we should wonder every day and every hour at His great love in coming into the world, and at the Father's love in sending Him. Dear reader, do *you think* of Jesus? Perhaps you never think of Him. You live just as if Jesus never

became poor for you—as if you had no Saviour. Oh! how sinful such an ungrateful heart is. Consider Jesus as *the Apostle* of your profession; why even the poor heathen think sometimes of those whom *they* call *their apostles*. Ask a poor Turk, whether he has got any apostle. "Oh, yes!" he will say, "Mahomet is my apostle." Yes, but Mahomet was not sent from God. Or ask a poor Chinese, whether he has any apostle. "Yes," he will say, "Confucius is my apostle," but he was not sent of God. One, and one alone, has been sent from God to save us from our sins. There is one *great Apostle*, even Jesus. How much we ought to think of Him—*consider* Jesus.

But what was the other name which St. Paul gives our Saviour? He calls Him the *High Priest* of our profession. The High Priest, under the Old Testament dispensation, had two great duties to perform. The first was to offer sacrifices for their own sins, and the sins of the peo-

ple, and the second was, to intercede, or pray, to God for them.

Now, you know what kinds of sacrifices they offered. They did not offer *themselves;* and, if they had done so, they could not have saved others, because they were sinners themselves; and so the Psalmist says (Psa. xlix. 7, 8), "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of their soul is precious and it ceaseth for ever." No, they did not offer themselves, but bulls and goats; yet these could not put away sin from the soul, or purge the conscience. But Jesus has offered a better offering: He offered *Himself,* as St. Paul tells us very often in his epistle to the Hebrews (chap. ix. 26), "But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared, to put away sin by the *sacrifice* of *Himself;*" and, again (chap. x. 10), "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," and His pre-

cious blood is not like the blood of bulls and goats: it *can* cleanse from all sin. The atonement of Jesus is quite perfect; so that when a penitent sinner trusts to it, and it alone, it brings him near to God; his sins are all forgiven; his heart is changed; his conscience is purged. Think, then, think much of the atonement of Jesus. See Him with the eye of faith dying on the cross; listen to the solemn, but blessed cry, "It is finished!" If you are not forgiven, think of Christ, your *High Priest;* fly to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; pray, that His precious blood may be sprinkled upon your heart: then, and not till then, you will be happy and peaceful. But if you have the happy feeling, that God has forgiven you, still *think much* of Jesus, as your High Priest. Bring all your daily sins to Him, and then you will be kept close to God; no dark cloud of guilt will come between your soul and God. The feeling, that all your sins are blotted out, and that God is

your Father, will grow more fresh and delightful. *Consider*, then, Jesus. You cannot think of Him too much. Everything else you may think about too much. You may think too much about *play* or *books*; you may think too much about *yourself*; you may even think too much about *your sins*, but you never can think too much about Christ: the more your thoughts are fixed on Him, the holier and happier you will be.

But where is Jesus now? In heaven. And what is He doing there? Does He remember His people still? Yes, says St. Paul (Heb. vii. 25), "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." There, though we cannot see Him or hear Him, He prays to His Father for us; He takes our weak prayers and blends them with the incense of His own prayers, and presents them to God. Turn to (Rev. viii. 3, 4)—"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it, with the prayers of all saints,

upon the golden altar which was before the throne; and the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Would it not be a comfort to you, dear child, when you feel, that your heart is very sinful and your prayers are very weak, would it not be a comfort to see your mother go into her quiet chamber to pray for you? Would it not encourage you to go in your little room, and try again to pour out your heart to God? Perhaps you would say, "Yes, though my prayers are very weak, I will still try to pray, because my dear mother is praying for me." Thankful you may well be, if you have a praying mother. But there is some one else, who prays for you, whose prayers are even better, than a mother's prayers. Jesus prays, and His prayers are always answered. Do you remember what He said to His Father, when He stood by the grave of Lazarus? —"I knew that Thou hearest Me always." When you kneel, then, on your knees on

earth, *consider* Jesus praying in heaven. When Satan whispers to you, "God will not hear the prayers of such a little child," then answer him, "Yes, He will, because He has promised to hear me; and, young as I am, I have got a High Priest; Jesus died for me, and Jesus prays for me." When Satan says to you, "Your weak prayers are of no use," then go to Jesus and say, "O my Saviour, my prayers *are* weak, very weak; take them and perfect them with Thy prayers, and so offer them up to Thy Father and my Father."

Shall I tell you about a little child, whom I knew very well, and who, I have reason to believe, *considered* Jesus? She lived with an aunt, whom she loved very much, and she was so obedient and gentle, that she never gave her any trouble. She knew a great many chapters of the Bible by heart, and many hymns likewise. She used to learn them in the week and say them on Sunday evening, and she very seldom missed a word. She seemed to love her

Bible very much. One day I read the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, and explained to her, how Jesus carries the lambs in His bosom. She seemed to feel it very much; and some weeks after, when her aunt one day said to her, "What shall I read to you?" she said, "Oh! read that chapter;" but she had forgotten which it was. Her aunt found it, and read it to her, and then she read it over to herself again. She used to pray much, and to carry her wishes to God, and this made her so very patient. When she was very ill, she was taken into the country to try change of air. Her aunt could not go with her, and the little girl would have preferred to stay at home with her aunt, but she went very cheerfully. She remarked afterwards, when the change had done her no good, that "she felt, that it was right to go, for she did not know, whether it might be the will of God, to make it the means of doing her good." When she grew worse, she was anxious to come home

again, but she was never impatient, and never expressed her wish. When her aunt said to her afterwards, "Why did you not tell us your wish?" she answered, "I prayed to God, to incline your heart to come and fetch me home, and I knew that, if it were His will, you would come." Thus, in all things she left herself in the hands of God. Her answers were always very clear about the way of salvation. One day she was asked, why she felt, that she needed a Saviour; she answered, "Because my heart is very sinful." Another day she said to her aunt, "You know, dear aunt, that I have not always been a good girl. When I first came to you I used to tell wicked falsehoods. It often makes me unhappy to think of it now. I am so much obliged to you for punishing me, when I was so young. If I had not been punished then, it would have been more difficult to overcome those sinful ways now I am older." After her return home, at her own wish one of her ministers visited

her. To him she expressed her gratitude to all, who had been kind to her, especially to her aunt, and said, in her sweet way, "It is through my aunt, that I have learnt to love Jesus." He prayed with her, and his prayer comforted her very much, and she was more cheerful the whole day after. The next morning she spoke of his prayer, and wished to see him again, but before he could come she had become insensible, and soon afterwards died. If I were asked what were the most beautiful features in this dear child's character, I should say "meekness and calm thoughtfulness." She considered God, her kind Father, and Jesus, her tender Saviour. Remember then, dear reader, whom you should *consider* every day—not on Sunday only, but every day. Consider Jesus. If one day passes away without your thinking of Jesus, then you should feel, "I have lost a day." "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

UNSELFISH THOUGHTS;

Or, I am not my own.

MANY people, my dear reader, feel and live, as if they were their own, as if their minds and their bodies belonged to themselves, and they may do with them, just what they please; and so we read (Ps. xii. 4) of wicked people, who say, "Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?" Others say, "My hand is my own, I may use it, as I think fit." Others feel, "My feet are my own, I may go just where I like;" and others, "My mind is my own, I may think, as I please." Others again say within themselves, "My money is my own, I may spend it, as I think best." Our sinful hearts are very fond of thinking, that we have *something*, which we can call our

own. The parable of the prodigal son is meant to show us this. When he was at home with his father, he had everything that he wanted—a nice room, plenty to eat, and, above all, his father's love. But he was not satisfied. He could not call it his own. So one day he asked his father to give him his portion of goods, something, with which he could do just what he liked. And when he got this he very soon left his father's house, and went into a far country, and there spent all his money in folly and sin. *That,* dear reader, is a picture of ourselves. We ought to hang upon God, just as a little babe hangs upon its mother. Does such a babe feel, that it has got this and that thing? Oh! no; if you could see the feeling of its little heart, it would be just this: "I have got a sweet, dear mother," and, in enjoying its mother's love, and carried in its mother's arms, it feels so safe and happy. *That,* my dear child, is what we should feel. St. Paul says (1 Cor. vi. 19), "Ye are not your

own;" and we should feel, "I have nothing of my own but God. My mind is not my own. My hands are not my own. My feet are not my own. My tongue is not my own. No, all is God's. One thing only I have, and that is God. God is my kind Father. His arm holds me; on Him I will hang." Oh! it is a happy thing to feel and say, "I am the Lord's."

There are two points, which I propose to explain to you.

First, *why* we are God's; and,

Secondly, *how* we ought to feel it.

First, then, *why* we are God's.

Many children feel an interest in making things of some kind. Some work a piece of work with great care. Some make a beautiful collection of wild flowers. Some are skilful in cutting wood into beautiful forms and shapes, or in making out of it something useful. Now, when you have finished your work, whatever it was, did you not feel, that it was *your own?* Perhaps you never intended to keep it. You

may have made it for some one else. Still there must have been a time, perhaps a very short time, when it was *yours*, and you felt, that it was *yours*. So then, whenever we make a thing out of materials belonging to us, then we call it *our own*. Now, who made us? You will say, "God made us." Yes, God made us. To whom, then, must we belong? To God; for He did not make us, and then give us up to some one else. Oh! no, he made us for *Himself*. Turn to (Is. xliii. 21), "This people have I formed for Myself: they shall show forth My praise." How good it was of God to create us! And oh! how very good to make us for *Himself*—not for another, but *for Himself!* Whenever, then, you look at anything, and the thought comes into your mind, "That is my own, for I made it," always let another thought come into your mind—"and I myself am God's, for He made me." The first reason, then, *why* we are God's, is because He formed or *created* us.

But many people have made beautiful things, and then have lost them. Some thief has watched his opportunity and stolen them; and doubtless you know, that not only *things*, but in some countries *men* themselves are stolen and made slaves. Now, if something is stolen from you, you lose it; you cannot enjoy the *use* of it, but you do not lose the *right* to it. If a poor African is carried away from his home and made a slave, he loses his liberty, but he does not lose his *right* to it. Are *we* slaves, or are we free? By nature we are *slaves*. We belong of *right* to God, but Satan has the power over us. You know, do you not, how he got it? You remember how he tempted Eve in Paradise, and how she and Adam yielded to the temptation. When our first parents were created, they were free, but when they did what Satan told them to do, they became slaves. But our bondage is very different from the bondage of a poor African slave. It is different in three ways: for, first, a poor

slave is taken away from his home *against his will;* but our wills are so sinful, that we become slaves *willingly*. Secondly, they feel their bondage very much; but we, until God teaches us by His Spirit, do not feel ours. We are like dreamers, and think, that we are free, when we are slaves. And thirdly, they are made slaves, when they are grown up, but we bring sinful hearts with us into this world—as David says (Ps. li. 5), "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Now, how can a poor slave be made free? In one of three ways. His master may feel for him, and say, "There, I give you your liberty." Or some relations might come, and take him away by force. So, when Lot was carried away captive, Abraham pursued the five kings, and rescued him. But there is yet a third way, and that is, to pay down a sum of money for his liberty. The sum of money, so paid, is called a *ransom*, and the slave is then said to be *redeemed*. Perhaps you

may have heard the story of some Englishmen, who were seized by banditti near Smyrna, a city in Asia Minor. The banditti carried them off into some wild mountains, and sent word, that they would let them go free, if a large sum of money was paid for their release. One of the Englishmen was married, and had several children. How anxious was the poor wife, when her husband did not return; and when she heard, that he had been carried away by robbers, but that they had not killed him, but wanted a ransom for him, she used every effort to raise the sum, though it was very large. Now you know—do you not?—in which of these three ways it is, that God makes sinners free from the bondage of sin. It is in the last way—by *ransom.* God's people are ransomed from *eternal destruction,* as it is written (Job xxxiii. 24), "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a *ransom.*" They are ransomed from the *power of Satan,* as our Saviour says (John viii.

36), "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." They are ransomed from the *power of death*, as it is promised (Hosea xiii. 14), "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I will be thy destruction." And what was this ransom, that could deliver from so dreadful a bondage? Oh! it was the greatest *ransom* ever paid down to deliver a poor slave. St. Peter tells us what it is (1 Pet. i. 18, 19), "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, but with *the precious blood of Christ*, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Oh! then, dear reader, we are God's, and not our own; not only, because God made us, but because, when we wandered from Him, He did not leave us to perish, but redeemed us by the precious blood of His own Son. And so when St. Paul says,

"Ye are not your own," he adds, "for ye are *bought* with a price."

But there are many—oh! how many—who do not love the Lord, who do not believe and *feel*, that they are God's. It is not enough, then, to be *created* by God. We may forget the hand, that made us. It is not enough to be *redeemed* by the blood of Jesus. We may forget what He has done to make us His. One thing more is necessary. What is it? (Isa. xliv. 3) shows us? What does God there promise? "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." What does this mean? Read on and you will see—"I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thy offspring." Water then signifies the Spirit. This promise is a beautiful promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit to sanctify our hearts, and make us bring forth fruit unto God. When God puts His Spirit in our hearts, oh! then it is, that we are so thankful to Jesus for His love in redeeming us; then it is, that one

says (Isa. xliv. 5), "I am the Lord's; and another calls himself by the name of Jacob; and another subscribes with his hand unto the Lord, and surnames himself by the name of Israel."

There is then, dear reader, a threefold cord, whereby God makes believers, and keeps them, His—creation, redemption, and sanctification. The Father creates. The Son redeems. The Spirit sanctifies. Now, if a person were to tie you to a post with *one* cord, perhaps you might break it. But suppose, that he tied you with *two* cords, it would not be so easy to break them And if he were to add a *third* cord, oh! surely, a *threefold* cord would hold you quite fast. Now God fastens the hearts of His children to Himself by a threefold cord, the golden cord of creation, the golden cord of redemption, and the golden cord of sanctification. And this threefold cord is not easily broken; oh! no, it fastens them sweetly and tightly to God.

But I promised to try and explain to you, *how* we ought to feel, that we are God's.

Several words are used in the beautiful verse, to which we have referred (Isa. xliv. 5); one is spoken of as saying, "I am the Lord's." "Another," it says, "shall call himself by the name of Jacob." Jacob, you remember, was the father of the twelve tribes—hence the Israelites are sometimes called in Scripture *Jacob*, as well as Israel; to "call himself, therefore, by the name of Jacob," means to feel and confess, that he belonged to the people of God. And "another," it says, "shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord," that is, shall write down his name, as belonging to God. Dear reader, have *you* ever felt, "I am the Lord's"? Has the Holy Spirit written the words, "The Lord's" on your heart? Oh! it is a happy thing to have that name written there, and to feel, "I do not belong to myself, I do not belong to the world, I belong to Jesus."

You know, that when you travel and carry luggage with you, you put your name and address upon it. I know some persons, who, when they travel abroad, paste a large blue star on their bags, besides having their addresses written upon it. This is of great use; for then they not only know their own baggage afar off, but other people see at once, that it is not theirs. They say "that cannot be mine, for my bag has no star upon it." So it is, dear reader, when the name of God is clearly written upon the heart, and when Jesus, the bright "morning-star," is there. Then Satan comes, and sees, that that heart is not his. The world comes and looks at it, and says, "that is not mine—mine has no such name, and no such star upon it." Self comes and says, "It is not mine, it is the Lord's." Dear child, when Satan tempts you, when the world tries to draw away your heart from God, oh! then remember and feel, "This heart is not mine, it is God's." When you are tempted to

say what you ought not to say, something unkind, or something untrue, then say, "This tongue is not mine, but God's." Whenever you are tempted to go, where you ought not to go, into some scenes of vanity or temptation, then let the thought come into your heart—"These feet are not mine, but God's." It is that unselfish thought, "I am the Lord's," which God makes one great means of keeping us out of temptation.

But there are other times, my dear reader, when you ought to feel this very strongly—perhaps you are happy now, you feel no pain, and have no trouble—you have kind friends, and dear parents, who love you. But some day trouble will come. God will take away those, whom you love best—oh! it is hard to part. It seems to tear the heart, and very often we are inclined to murmur. When the murmur begins to rise, we should check it with this thought, "The beloved mother, the dear friend, whom God has taken from me, was

not mine, but God's." Or if it please God to send you pain, or to deprive you of the faculty of sight or hearing, oh! then remember, "This body, in which I feel so much pain, is not mine, but God's; why should not God do, what He sees to be best, with His own?" It gives great resignation, it fills the heart with great peace, when through faith we can feel—"I am the Lord's."

KIND THOUGHTS;

Or, Whom can I make Happy?

THERE are many beautiful thoughts, which the Spirit loves to put in our minds —holy thoughts, unselfish thoughts, lowly thoughts. One of the most beautiful of all good thoughts is a *kind* thought. God tells us to be *kind* one to another; turn to (Ephes. iv. 32), "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." I will try to point out to you some kind thoughts, and then show you, why we should have them.

First then we should have *kind* thoughts towards the *poor*.

Poverty is one of the trials, which sin

has brought into the world. But God loves to turn the curse into a blessing. He often makes the poor rich in faith. There are some people, who think a great deal of the rich, because they are rich; they like to have wealthy friends, and they overlook and despise the poor. But God is angry with those, who do so. He bids us be *kind* to them. Mark, dear reader, that word *kind*. Some people think it is quite enough, if they *give* them something. But there is an unkind and haughty way of giving, which wounds their feelings. It is kindness and sympathy, which soothe them most. Perhaps you have very little, that you can give to the poor, though all may give something. But if so, you may still be *kind* to them; when you are at home, you may visit them with your mother, you may look kind, and speak some kind word to them. And if you only pray to God and think about it, you will be sure to find *little* ways of doing them good.

Then we should have kind thoughts towards the *weak*.

Some children love to teaze those, who are weaker than themselves. They provoke them to anger, and when they become angry, they beat them. This is very sinful and unmanly. It is altogether unlike God, who helps the weak against the strong. There was once a little boy who went to a large school, when he was very young and weak. He could not defend himself. But there was another boy there, who knew some of the little boy's friends. He was bigger and much stronger. He was very *kind*, too, and said to the little boy, "if any boys teaze you and treat you roughly, tell me, and I will help you." These kind words made the little boy much happier, than he would otherwise have been. Both those boys have now grown up, and the one, who was kind to the other, has become a Christian man, and been kind to a great many weak and suffering people. Never, then, dear reader, teaze any child

weaker than yourself; never be unkind to others, and if you should ever see others treating some weak child with unkindness, defend that child, if you can, and if it is out of your power to do so, then speak some kind and gentle words to him. If you cannot make others kind, you can be kind yourself, and your sympathy may give him much comfort.

Again, we should be kind to the *friendless.*

There are some, who always make friends wherever they go. There is something so gentle, so open, and so loving in them, that the hearts of others are drawn to them. But there are others again, who pass through this world almost friendless. The fault is often in themselves. There is something in their disposition, which repels others. Perhaps they are so reserved, that none can get to know them; or they are so bad tempered, that others are afraid of a quarrel; or they are so proud, that others feel, that they would always have to

give way. Now you will sometimes find one such child in a family, and nearly always one such in a school. One, whom no one seems to love; to whom no one seems kind. You will hear other children say, "I never can love such an one." Now what do you think, dear reader? ought we be kind to the friendless, when the fault is in themselves? Yes, we should be so. Even if you cannot make another child your *friend*, still you may show him *kindness*, and perhaps your kindness may be the means of helping him to overcome his faults. Let me give you an instance of this. There was once a little boy, who was very much deformed, and had a very bad temper; indeed, he was so ferocious, that his mother often wished, that he was dead; almost as soon as he could walk, he always carried a stick in his hand, with which he beat every one, who came near him. His brothers and sisters were so afraid of him, that they always kept at a distance, when they could do so. His

parents were always scolding and beating him. The servants hated him too, and annoyed him, whenever they could. All this made him still more ferocious. His mother never let him eat with the other children; he had all his meals alone by himself. Of course he did not like this. One day, when the other children were dining with their mother, he went into the room in a great rage, saying, that he was the eldest, and that he would sit before his brothers and sisters at the table. They gave him a place at once, for they were very much afraid of him; but he made himself so disagreeable, that his mother determined to send him out of the room. Before, however, she could do so, he overturned the table, and everything upon it was broken and spoiled. She determined to punish him, but before she had time to do so, a lady came into the room. Her father was a learned Jew, but she was a true Christian. She had great discernment of character, and from something,

which she observed in this poor deformed boy, she thought, that some day he would become a great man. So she spoke very kindly to him. He was so unaccustomed to be kindly spoken to, that he did not like it at first, but took up a stick, and threatened to beat her; but she did not mind his threats, but took him gently by the hand, and spoke to him still more kindly. From that moment he became quite changed. He tried to overcome his bad temper, and after a while he became so kind, and generous, and brave, that every one loved him. When he grew up, he became a great general and often fought for his country, and though he lived three hundred years ago, his countrymen never to this day forget Du Guesclin. What a wonderful effect a few words of kindness had upon his rough heart. If, then, you know some one, who is friendless and disliked, because he has a bad temper, do not say, "oh! it is useless to be

kind to such an one." Ask God to help you to have kind thoughts, and do kind acts. Those, who have bad tempers, are made worse by unkindness. God is very kind to the sinful and friendless. When the love of Christ constrains us to be kind, to the poor and weak, the friendless and the evil, oh! then we are like Jesus, and like God.

But we must go one step farther. It is not only to *men*, that we ought to be *kind*, we should be kind to *animals* too. How cruel some children are. They delight in putting poor animals and insects to pain, tormenting and killing them without any reason. If we remembered, that every little insect is made by God, and that God takes care of them, and feeds them every day, we should not be cruel; we should be kind to them, and so it says (Prov. xii. 10), "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." If, dear reader, you have ever treated any of God's creatures with cruelty,

I hope, you will never do so again, but be kind to them, because God's hand made them as well as you.

But why, secondly, should we have *kind* thoughts towards others? There are very many reasons, I will mention a few of them.

First then we should have kind thoughts, because it is the *will* of God.

The Bible reveals to us the will of God, and shows us what thoughts God would have us cherish, and what acts He would have us perform. Now, if you will turn to (Amos i. 9, 10), you will find, that God was angry with Tyre, because its inhabitants were *unkind* towards His people. "Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Tyrus and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant. But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof." God was angry with Edom

for being *unkind*, as the very next verses show, "Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever. But I will send a fire upon Teman which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah." And very often does the word of God tell us to be kind to each other. St. Paul says, "Be kind one to another;" again (Col. iii. 12, 13), we read, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, *kindness*, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering: forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." St. Peter too says (1 Ep. iii. 8, 9), "Finally be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another: love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or

railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." It is the will of God, then, that we should be kind to each other. It is not something, which we *may* do, or *not*, as *we* think *well*, but something, which God *commands*. If you are not kind, if you say, "Oh, I can't show kindness to such an one; I do not like him," then you do not please God.

Another reason is, because *God* has been so kind to us. How kind it is of Him to send His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ from heaven, to save such miserable sinners, as we are. How kind it is of Him to give the Holy Spirit to them, that ask Him. How kind it is to answer our weak prayers, even the prayers of a little child, to watch over us day by day, to give us kind relations and friends. Yes, God is very kind. Turn to (Titus iii. 4, 6), "But after that the *kindness* and love of God *our* Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of

righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." And so (Eph. iv. 32) St. Paul says, "Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Now if God has been, and is, so kind to us every day, we ought to be kind to others. Was not that a very wicked servant, who, when his lord had kindly forgiven him his large debt, went out, and meeting with a fellow-servant, who owed him a few pence, seized him by the throat, and said, "Pay me that thou owest"? and so are we, if the kindness of God does not touch our hearts, and lead us to be kind to others. You have heard, I dare say, of the beautiful story of the negro slave, who was carried away from his friends and country. He was taken to a strange land. There he heard the Gospel, and became a true Christian; he served his master so faithfully for many

years, that he entirely won his confidence. Whenever his master wished to purchase some fresh slaves, he always employed him to choose them. One day a slave ship came into the port, and he was sent to purchase two or three slaves. There were a great many in the ship, some young and strong, others old and weak. After looking at them, he said, "I wish to buy this slave," fixing on an old and weak slave. "Why should you buy him?" said another, "he is old and weak, and will be of no use." "This is the slave that I shall buy," continued the Christian. "Ah, he must be a relation or a friend," said the other. "No," said the Christian slave, "he is not my relation or my friend, that man is my greatest enemy. He seized me, when I was free, and sold me. He is my worst enemy; but the Gospel teaches me to love and be kind to my enemies." So he bought the old slave, and took the greatest care of him. He also bought some young slaves for his master. What

a beautiful example! What made him act so? oh! he felt the kindness of God towards himself. This made him kind to his enemies.

Lastly, we ought to be kind to others, because this makes people happy. This is a sad world, and people make it more sad, than it need be, by want of kindness. Oh, if our hearts were like the heart of Jesus, so loving, and so kind, how we should cheer the sad and sorrowful. Our thoughts would be thoughts of kindness, our looks would be looks of kindness, and our words, words of kindness. Jesus was always kind. He loved to make people happy. Let us pray to God to make us kind, and then we shall make many happy also.

LOWLY THOUGHTS;

Or, "He must Increase."

JOHN the Baptist was a wonderful man, and a faithful servant of God. See what Jesus says of him (Matt. xi. 11), "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he." And again (John v. 30), "He was a burning and a shining light:" John was very bold, and was not afraid to reprove kings and princes, when they did what was wrong and sinful. He was a powerful preacher. People flocked from all parts to hear him, and his words made such an impression on

their hearts, that many cried out "What shall we do?" Many became his disciples, and some thought that he was the Messiah. But all this success and admiration did not spoil John, as it does some people. He was very lowly. He could not bear people to think, that he was the Messiah. He said to them plainly (v. 28), "I am not the Christ." He told them (ch. i. 26, 27), "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." He explained to them, that he himself was not the Bridegroom, but only the "friend of the Bridegroom," who loved to listen to "the Bridegroom's voice," and he told them, how he felt himself towards Jesus. "He must increase, but I must decrease," (John iii. 30). Now you know, I am sure, what to "increase" means. It signifies to grow bigger and bigger, and to "decrease" means to grow less and less." But in what way was Jesus to increase,

and John to decrease? It does not mean, that Jesus would increase in "wisdom and stature," as it tells us that He did, when He was a little boy (Luke ii. 52), because now He was about thirty years old. It means, that he would increase in the *thoughts of others*; and John felt, that the more people *thought of Jesus*, the less they would think of *him*. Their thoughts would be drawn from the servant to the Master, from man to a great and almighty Saviour. Just as it is with the stars and the sun. When the night is dark, and we cannot see the sun, how beautiful are the little twinkling stars; we love to watch them, and admire their brightness. But when the sun rises again, then they all vanish from our sight. They do not leave the heavens. *There* they are still, but we cannot see them, for the bright light of the sun seems to put them all out. So before Jesus came, John the Baptist was like a bright star, on which thousands loved to gaze, but when Jesus the Sun of

righteousness arose, then before His great light the little star began to wax dim. "He must increase," said John, "but I must decrease." Some people would not have liked to be thought less of. They would have been angry and displeased. But John was not angry; he wished people to think *more of Jesus*, and *less of himself*. What did this show? His *lowliness* and *humility* of mind.

Let me then speak to you a little, my dear child, about *lowly* thoughts. There are two kinds of lowly thoughts. Lowly thoughts towards God, and lowly thoughts towards man.

First let me try to point out some of these thoughts; secondly, to explain, *why* we should have them; and thirdly, to show *how* to *get* and *keep* them.

First then let me mention some lowly thoughts; and we will begin with *lowly thoughts towards God.*

Jacob was once returning to Canaan after a long absence; when he was on his

way, he heard that his brother Esau was coming to meet him; he was much afraid, for when he had left home years before, Esau had threatened to kill him, and he feared, that perhaps Esau might be angry and revengeful *still*. What did poor Jacob do? The very best thing he could do. He prayed to God. It was a beautiful prayer which he offered, and amongst other things he said, as you will see (Gen. xxxii. 10), "I am not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies." Jacob felt his unworthiness. This was a *lowly* thought.

Once when Jesus was on earth, a centurion came to Him, and asked Him to heal his servant, who was very ill. Jesus promised to do so, and said, "I will come and heal him." What did the centurion answer? You will see, if you refer to (Matt. viii. 8), "Lord, he said, I am not worthy, that Thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." He felt his *unworthiness*. It was a *lowly thought*.

Such too was the feeling of John the Baptist, when he thought of Jesus. He felt, that he was even unworthy to unloose His shoe's latchet. "He must increase, but I must decrease." Oh! this is what *we* ought to feel; we should feel our own sinfulness, our own unworthiness. One day a good man visited a cottage, and heard a poor woman say, that she was always in trouble; so he said to her, "What is your trouble?" "More," she answered, "than I can tell you, but the worst is that my poor little Susan is out of her mind." "How came that, he said?" "I sent her," she replied, "to school, to a good mistress, for a long time. I believe the good lady meant no harm, but one afternoon she read to the children a little book about Adam and Eve. Many of the children laughed; but Susan kept on crying; when she came home, she told me what her mistress had read, and how the children laughed; then she began to talk out of her mind. All our neighbours say, that she is

out of her mind, for she says, that she is a sinner, and a great one too."* Do *you* think, dear reader, that that little girl was out of her mind? Oh! no, it would be a happy thing, if every one of you were just as much out of your mind, as she was. It was her ignorant mother, who was out of her mind. She was in her *right* mind, for she had *lowly* thoughts of herself; she felt her *sinfulness* and *unworthiness*. Dear reader, have *you* felt, what she felt? Have *you* felt the sinfulness of your heart? Oh! if you have not done so, your heart is not *lowly*. Pray to God to teach you to feel your sins.

The first *lowly thought* then is to feel our own sinfulness, and unworthiness.

What is the next? There was once a poor Indian, whose heart it pleased God to touch by His Holy Spirit. One day a white man asked him, how this change was made. The Indian said, that he

* See "True Stories for Children," p. 27. Religious Tract Society.

could not explain it, but if the white man would go with him, he would show him, how it was done. The white man went. After walking some distance they came to a wood. Then the Indian stopped, gathered a great many dry leaves, and made a circle of them. Then he put something into the middle of it (what do you think, that it was?—a poor worm), and set the leaves on fire. The worm soon felt the heat, and went first to one side, and then to the other, to try and get out, but it could not. There was fire on every side. After going from side to side in vain, the poor worm came back into the middle of the circle, and stretched itself out, as if without hope, to die. At that moment the Indian caught up the worm in his hand. "There," he said, "that was the way, that God did to me. I felt myself a sinner, I felt myself in danger, I saw the angry eye of God flashing upon me, I tried to escape on one side, but I met fire; I went to the other, it was

on fire; at last, without hope, I gave myself up to die. Then Jesus Christ take my soul right up."* Some, when they feel the danger of their souls, comfort themselves with the thought of their own righteousness. That is a *proud* thought. Some try to escape in their own way. That is a *vain* thought. It is a lowly thought, when we are willing to be saved in *God's own way*; when we feel, that we can do nothing ourselves, but look to Jesus, and accept in faith His finished work, His perfect atonement, His precious blood. If you do not *accept* Jesus as your all in all, your heart is not *lowly*; it is still hard and *proud*. Like that poor worm in the circle of fire, you must lie *still* before God, and say, "O Jesus, save me," and when His hand is let down, you must catch hold of it.

We have mentioned now two *lowly* thoughts *towards God*. Let me now

* See "A Sister's Stories," p. 27. Religious Tract Society.

mention some lowly thoughts towards *others*. When Jesus was on earth, one day he went into the house of a Pharisee to eat bread. Many others were asked likewise. When they were coming in, Jesus watched them, and He observed, that they chose out the "chief rooms" for themselves. What did this show? It showed, that their thoughts towards each other were not *lowly* thoughts. What did Jesus tell them to do? He said to them (Luke xiv. 10), "When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room." The lowly follower of Jesus is willing to take the *lowest* place? Do *you* do so, dear child? or do you feel angry and mortified, when others are put before you, and you have the lowest place. If you have feelings of that kind, then your heart and your thoughts are not yet *lowly*. Again, those who have lowly thoughts are ready to do anything for any one. Some children say, "I won't do such a thing, that is altogether beneath me." There is

much pride lurking in such feelings. Look at Jesus, how different He was. Though He was the Saviour of the world, the heir of all things, and very God, yet He stooped so low, as to wash the feet of His disciples. Do not be afraid of your dignity. Nothing is so really dignified, as humility. If we stoop to the lowest, we shall never stoop one thousandth part so low, as Jesus stooped, when He took the form of a servant, when He washed the feet of His own disciples, and when He endured the shameful death of the cross. Another mark of a lowly heart is, when a person receives reproof and correction with meekness. Many children excuse themselves, when they have done wrong. They throw the blame on some one else, just as Adam threw it on Eve, and Eve on the serpent, and when they are corrected, they grow angry and sullen. But a lowly child does not grow angry or sullen; she says to herself, "I deserve this reproof, and much more than this," and so she tries to

profit by it. Dear reader, watch your heart, when you are reproved, or corrected. *Then* it is, that you will be best able to judge, whether your thoughts are *lowly* or not.

The second point, which I promised to explain, was, *why* we should have *lowly* thoughts.

First we should have them, because it is the *will of God.*

The Bible says a great deal about *humility,* and *lowly* thoughts. So (1 Peter v. 5, 6) we read, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder: yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." Is it not terrible to have God resist us? If you are proud, He *will resist* you, and what can you do? If you are lowly in heart, He will give you more grace. God dwells in the *humble* (Isa. lvii. 15) —"For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name

is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a *contrite* and *humble* spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God listens to their prayers (Ps. ix. 12)—"He forgetteth not the cry of the humble." How *lowly* too Jesus was. He Himself said (Matt. xi. 29), "I am meek, and lowly in heart." To have very lowly thoughts is to be like Jesus.

And secondly, what a beautiful grace *humility* is. A good man once said, "If you ask me, what is the first grace? I answer *humility*. What is the second? *humility*. What the third? *humility*." Was it not a good answer? There are some flowers, which lift themselves up, as if they wished to be admired by all. Look at the great sun-flower, how high it grows! and how large it is! yet it is not beautiful. But there is another little flower, which grows in the shade in the deep valley, as if it only wished to be seen

by the eye of God. It is called the Lily of the valley. It hangs down its white and graceful head, a beautiful emblem of real humility.

But here, dear child, a warning is needed. Humility is beautiful and admired; hence many wish to be adorned with it. But it is very difficult to attain, and so many put something that looks like it, in its place. Beware of this. If you wish to *be* really humble, the Spirit of God has put the *lowly* thought into your heart. If you wish to *appear* humble, and to be admired for your humility by others, it is all pride, and one of the very worst kinds of pride.

Lastly, how can we obtain lowly thoughts?

The beautiful words of the Baptist, "He must increase," show us. Jesus must dwell in your heart. Jesus must *increase* in your thoughts. The more His love fills your heart, the more humble you will be. When there has been a mist in the mountains, I have sometimes seen the little

graceful flowers bending their heads downwards under the weight of the shining drop of water, which they have gathered. In the same way, it is when the grace of God fills the heart, that it bends down under its refreshing weight, and is full of lowly thoughts. Pray, oh! pray then much for the Holy Spirit. Pray that Jesus may fill your heart, that He may increase in your soul, and then as Jesus gets higher and higher in your thoughts, you will get lower and lower in your own, you will decrease. Have you ever observed any one drawing water out of a deep well with two buckets? The buckets are so arranged, that whilst one of them is raised, the other descends. There is a point, at which the buckets are nearly even just for a moment; it is when they pass each other, one going up, the other going down into the well. But when the full bucket arrives at the top, the empty one is at the bottom getting water. There are some people, who think *much* of them-

selves, and *little* of Christ. They place themselves high, and so Christ is low in their thoughts. This is pride. There are others, who think something of Christ, but they also think too much of themselves; like the buckets when they pass each other,. neither of them is very high or very low. But in the lowly heart, Christ is at the *top*, always at the top, and self always at the *bottom*.

Dear reader, let Jesus be always *high* in your thoughts, and then you will have *lowly* thoughts of *yourselves*. You will love to feel like John, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

HAPPY THOUGHTS;

Or, to Die is Gain.

Do you think, that it is a happy thing to die? Perhaps, dear reader, you may say "No. I should like *not* to die at all. I should like to be taken to heaven without dying, as Enoch was. I should like to go to heaven in a chariot of fire, like Elijah." Well! perhaps you will *not* die at all—how not die? Does it not say (Heb. ix. 27), "It is appointed unto men *once* to die?" yes it does—and yet perhaps you may *never* die. How so? Because Jesus may come again *first*. When He comes, He will find some people alive on the earth. Turn to (1 Thess. iv. 15), "For this we say unto you by the word

of the Lord, that we which are *alive*, and *remain* unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent, or go before, them which are asleep"—and (v. 17), "Then we which are *alive*, and *remain*, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Refer now to (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52), "Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." You see, then, that *some* will be alive, when Jesus comes—and those, who are alive then, and love Jesus, will *not* die; but they will be changed. Perhaps *we* shall be alive, when Jesus comes, for He *may come very soon.* None can tell you the day and the hour, when He *will* come. But the Bible tells us, that He will come *just* when the world does not expect it. St. Paul says (1 Thess. v. 2),

that the Lord will come "as a thief in the night." Now when a thief intends to rob a house, does he tell the inmates of it the time, that he means to enter it? No. He endeavours to choose the hour, in which he would be least of all expected—when all are fast asleep—he takes them by surprise—just in the same way the Lord of glory will take the world by surprise. You must not, however, think, that Jesus Christ *wishes* to take us by surprise. He tells us to watch. But He *will* take the world by surprise, because people do not watch. They will be doing just as *usual*, when that hour comes. Some will be committing sin, as *usual*—some will be working, as *usual*—some will be eating and drinking, as *usual*—some children will be doing their lessons, as *usual*—some will be amusing themselves with their playthings, as *usual*. The sun will rise that morning, just as *usual*—when all of a sudden the trumpet of the Archangel will sound, and Jesus

will come in glory, and every eye will see Him.

But perhaps, dear reader, you feel *afraid* to die, afraid to see Jesus, when He comes. A short time ago, I was told about a little girl, who was afraid to see Jesus. There had been a terrible thunder-storm, and the vivid lightning had frightened her very much. She thought within herself, "oh, if the coming of Christ is like *that*, how frightened I shall be." She was afraid to hear the Archangel's trumpet, but still more afraid to see the *bright light* of His coming. Is she still afraid? No, her fear has now passed away. She read one day in a little book about Jesus taking care of His lambs, and this, through God's blessing, quite removed her fear. But why are you afraid to die? could you tell me? Perhaps you say, "No, I could not tell any one." Shall I tell *you*, why you are afraid to die? You have got a still small voice within you. You know what

it is. It is the voice of conscience—and that voice whispers to you, that you have sinned against God—and it is *sin*, that makes you afraid to die, and to meet Jesus. Is it not so? Some children *ought* to be afraid to die. Show me a wicked child, one that does not *pray*, one that does not *like the Bible*, one that does not *love Jesus*, one that talks in church, one that chooses bad companions—oh! that child has great reason to fear death. Death would be terrible to such a child. But show me a child, that loves the Bible, and prayer—one, who is washed in the precious blood of Christ—one, who loves Jesus, and tries to please God—one, who is obedient to his parents and teachers, and listens attentively in the house of God—should such a child fear death? oh, no. That child is a lamb in Christ's fold, and will not Jesus take care of His *lambs* in *death*, as well as in *life?* You are afraid to touch a wasp, because it has a *sharp* sting; but if you knew, that its sting was

drawn out, you would not mind its settling upon you. You would say, "Do not be afraid, it cannot hurt me." Now death has *its* sting. If you turn to (1 Cor. xv. 56) you will see what it is: "The sting of death is sin." But a child, that believes in Jesus, is a *pardoned* child. The sting of death is drawn. When death comes, it has *no sting*—and such a child may sing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Will you now refer to (2 Tim. i. 10), where you will find some beautiful words? What does it say there, that Jesus has done?—"abolished death"—or as it really means, brought death to nought—made it of none effect to the penitent and believing. So that true Christians need not be afraid to die. St. Paul says (Heb. ii. 14, 15), "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him, that had the power of death, that is the devil: and de-

liver them, who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." Simeon believed in Jesus, and he was not afraid to die. Stephen believed in Jesus, and he was not afraid to die. Paul believed in Jesus, and he was not afraid to die—he even *wished* to die. "To die," he says (Phil. i. 21), "is gain;" and again (v. 23), "Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better."

Let me give you now a few simple reasons, why to the true Christian the thoughts of death are happy thoughts.

The first reason is because there is no *sin* in heaven.

Sin it is, that spoils everything in this world. Little children, perhaps, meet to play together. They look forward to it with great pleasure, and think what a happy day it will be. They begin their play. One child soon hurts another by mistake. The other grows angry. They quarrel, and all the pleasure is lost. How different in heaven. There are no bad

tempers, no sullen looks, no unkind words in heaven. Again. Have you ever been ill? Perhaps you have, and when you were ill, you may have thought a great deal about God; and a kind mother may have talked to you about Jesus. Did not this thought come into your mind then? "Oh! I shall *never* forget God again. I shall *always* think about Jesus. I will always be good in future." But when you got well, ah! then you broke all your good resolutions, and soon forgot God again. *Here*, you see, is *sin* again. How dreadful a thing *sin* is. But in heaven, there is no *forgetfulness* of God. All *think* of Jesus there. The beautiful song, which the saints sing in heaven, shows us how much they think of Him, and love Him. You will find it (Rev. v. 9), "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and na-

tion: and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests; and we shall reign upon the earth."

This, then, is one reason why a true Christian feels, that to die is gain. He wishes to be where there *is no sin*.

And then, too, there is no sorrow in heaven. A little girl once stood by her mother, and watched the big tears roll down her pale, worn cheeks. Why did she weep? She was a widow, and her heart was very desolate, because her husband was taken from her. The little child looked up at her tearful eyes, and widow's cap, and then said, "Dear mamma, shall you be a widow in heaven?" No, in heaven there is no sorrow, and no widowhood. Many, oh! how many tears are shed on earth. All the eyes, which look at this little book, have shed and will shed tears at some time. But in heaven God will wipe the *last tear* from the eyes of His people; and when He wipes them away, they will never start again. The

Bible tells us this. Look at (Rev. vii. 17), "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Oh! what a happy place heaven will be. There is no sin, and no sorrow there. Is it wonderful that St. Paul should say, "To die is gain"?

A third reason is, "Because everything will be so beautiful in heaven." There are many beautiful things in this world; and perhaps when you have been looking upon them, on the flowers and trees, and other works of God's hands, you may have thought within yourself, "Shall I see such beautiful things in heaven"? If you do not see these *very* things in heaven, you will see things, that are far more beautiful. Everything in heaven will be beautiful—nothing there will ever look ugly. *Now*, for instance, our bodies are very imperfect, but *there* they will be quite perfect. It pleases God, that now some should be deaf, some blind, some dumb, some who have lost the use of a limb, some who are

weak from old age. But in heaven every feature and every faculty will be perfect. There will be no deafness, or blindness, or dumbness, and no old age in heaven. There will be beautiful sights in heaven, and every eye will be able to look on them; delightful sounds, and every ear will be able to hear them. The strength of the aged will be renewed. The vile bodies of the saints will be made like the glorious body of Jesus, as St. Paul says (Phil. iii. 21), "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working, whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

There are many more things, my dear reader, which make it a happy thing for the true Christian to depart; but I will only mention one more. This is the best reason of all, and on this account I have kept it to the last. What do you think it is? Why did St. Paul wish to depart? That he "might *be with Christ.*" Why

is it a happy thing to die? The chief reason is, "Because then the true Christian is *with Jesus*."

Those, whose hearts are prepared for death, love their Saviour. It often grieves them, that they do not love Him better, and know more of Him now. But this makes them long for heaven. They often think, "There I shall see Him as He is, and shall never lose sight of Him." Yes, Jesus has promised this Himself. Turn to (John xiv. 3), "Where I am, there ye may be also." Jesus has prayed for this (John xvii. 24), "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." St. Paul says, that for the Christian to be "at home in the body" is to be "absent from the Lord;" and to be "absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." And St. John says (1 John iii. 2), "Beloved, now are we

the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

There was once a little boy, who thought very much of being with Christ. When he was only eight years old, nothing gave him so much pleasure as to hear about Jesus. He often asked his sisters to pray with him, and one day he said to one of them, "Come, let us make a covenant with God, to give Him our whole hearts." When he was ten years old, he was taken ill, and suffered much from his head. But he was very happy, for he thought that he would soon be with Jesus. One day he said to his father, "Oh, how delightful it will be to rest with Jesus." He died soon after, and now he does *rest* with Jesus.

Which of these reasons do you like best? *I* should like to see all the beautiful things in heaven. I should like to be, where no sorrow can reach me. I should like still

more to be without sin; but the best thing of all will be to see Jesus, and be with Him for ever.

My dear reader, I asked you just now whether you are afraid to die. Now I wish to ask you another question: "Are you *prepared* to die?" Death often comes very suddenly—are *you* ready? God may take you, when you do not expect it; are *you* ready? Children die, as well as grown up people—are *you* ready? If you love sin, you are *not* ready. But if you are sorry for your sins, if you love Jesus and hate sin, then you are ready, and then you need not be afraid to die. You know that some children are afraid to be *all alone* in the dark. But they are not afraid to be in the dark, if their mother is with them. *I* should be afraid to die *alone;* but I am not afraid to die, if Jesus is with me—and I know He will be with me, if I trust in Him—for He has said (Isa. xliii. 2), "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the

rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." So that I may say, with David (Ps. xxiii. 4), "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."

THE END.

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